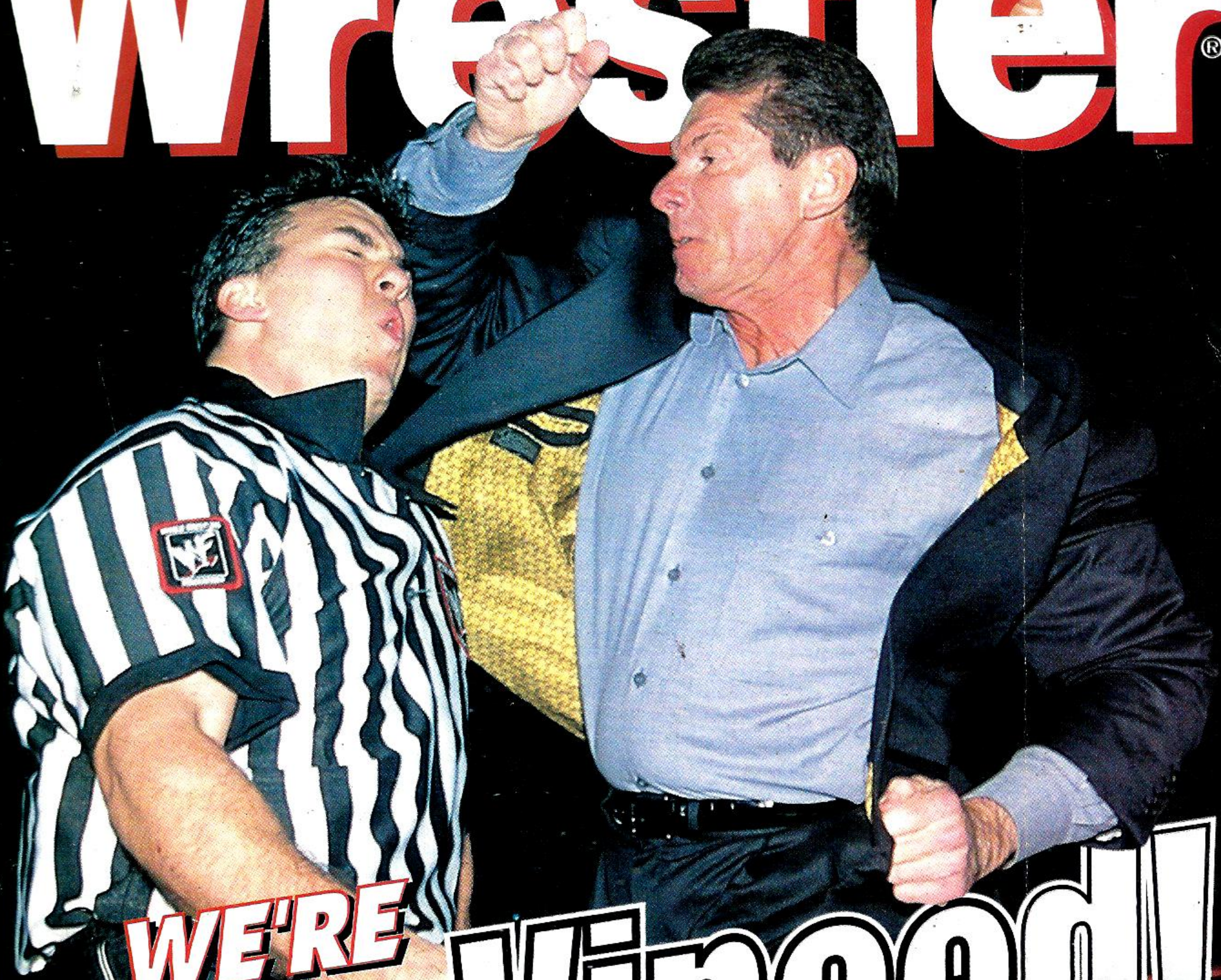


WHAT'S LEX TO DO WITH THAT 11 POUNDS OF FAT?

THE WRESTLER

Wrestler[®]



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CON-VINced!

**THIS PUNCH SAVED
THE WWF!**

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The Radicals! • Sandman & Rhino! • Cyrus!

August 2000

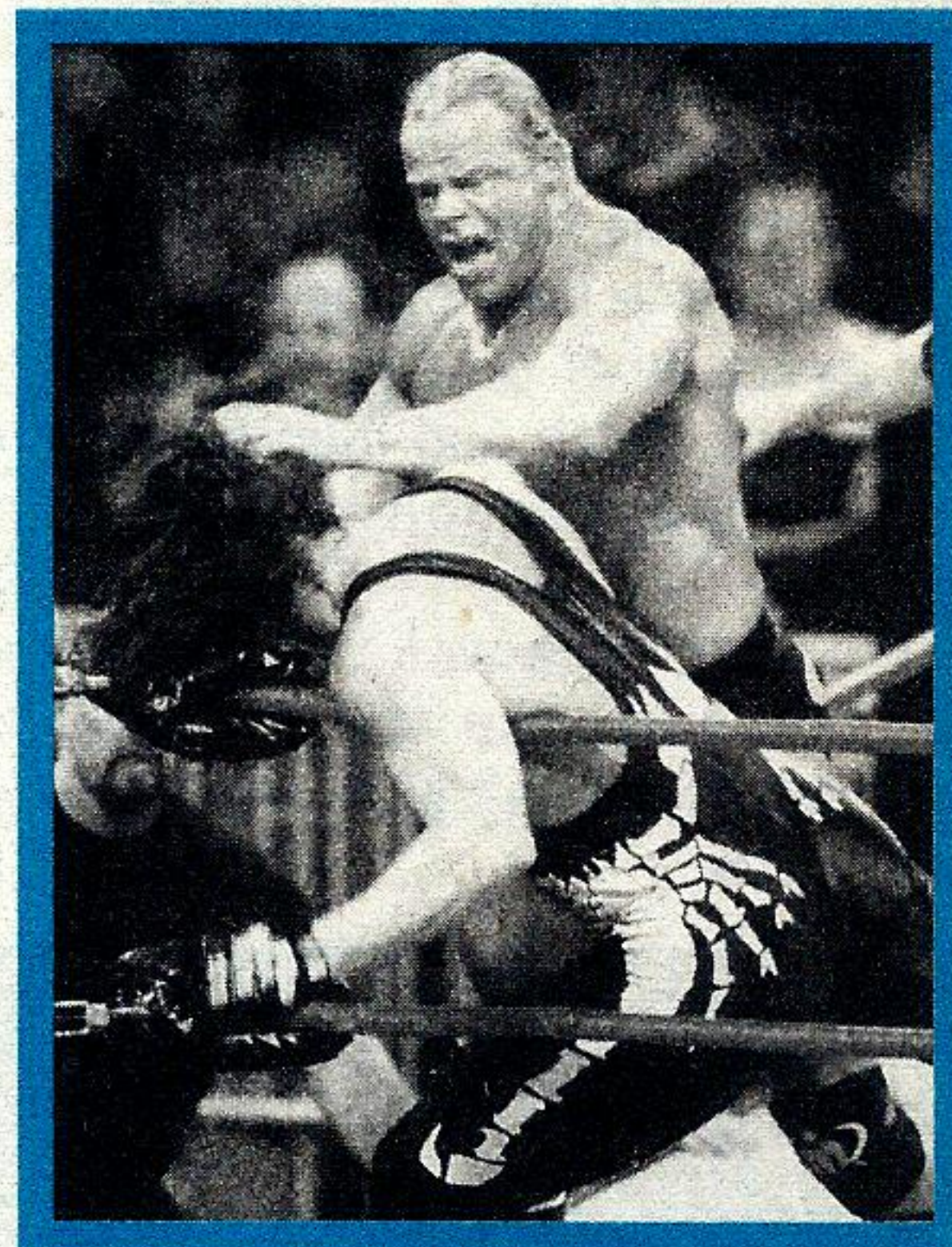
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THE Wrestler

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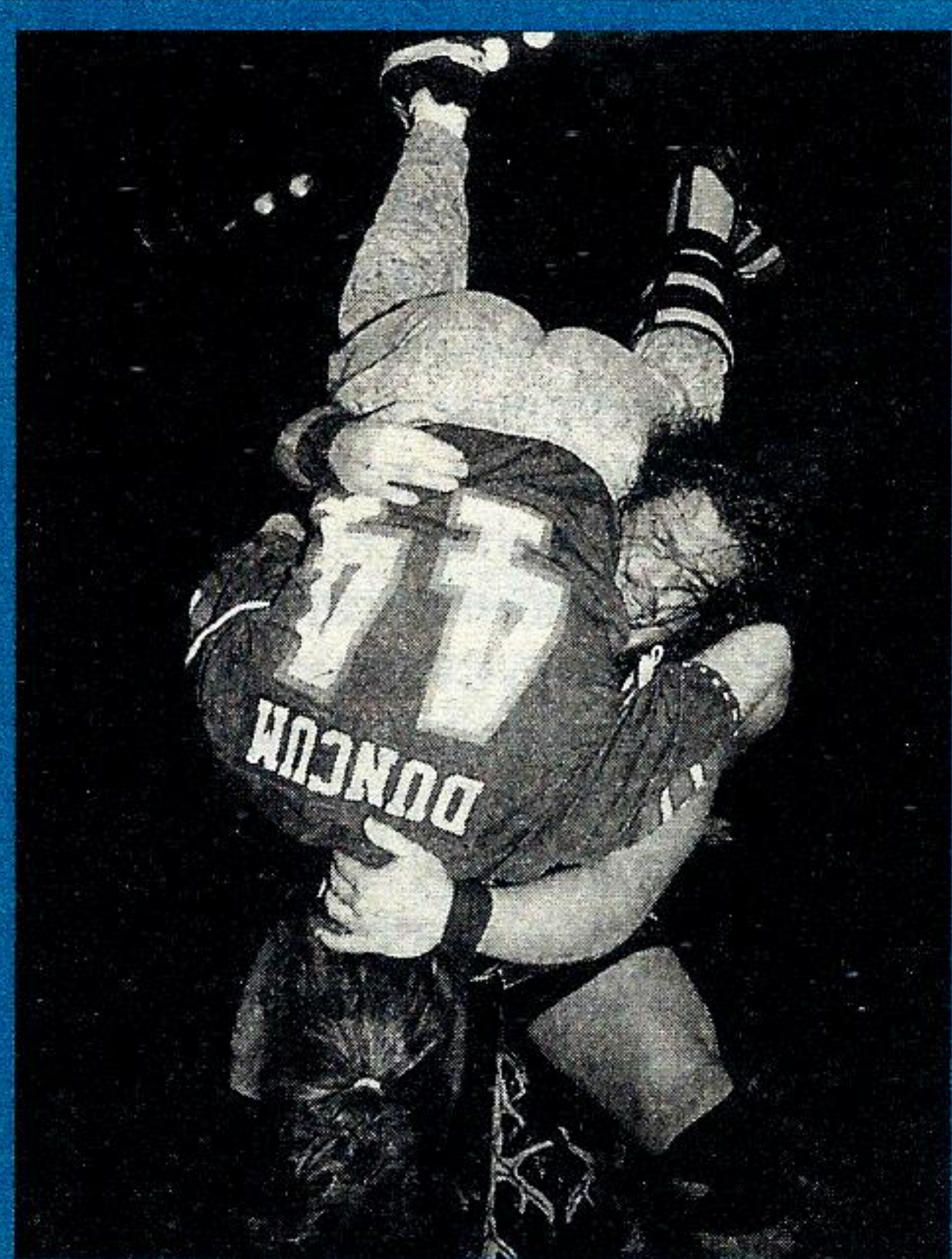
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YOUR Letters

FAREWELL TO FOLEY?

When Mick Foley returned from retirement to wrestle at WrestleMania XVI, he did a disservice to his family and all his fans. He should have stayed at home and played with his kids, but he instead opted to come back to the ring just like every other guy who loses a retirement match and then breaks his moral obligation to remain retired.

I thought Mick was better than that, but I guess that when it comes right down to it, he's just like everyone else.

Goodbye, Mick. In my opinion, you destroyed your legacy by renegeing on your word.

ASHLEY NOONEN
Chicago, IL

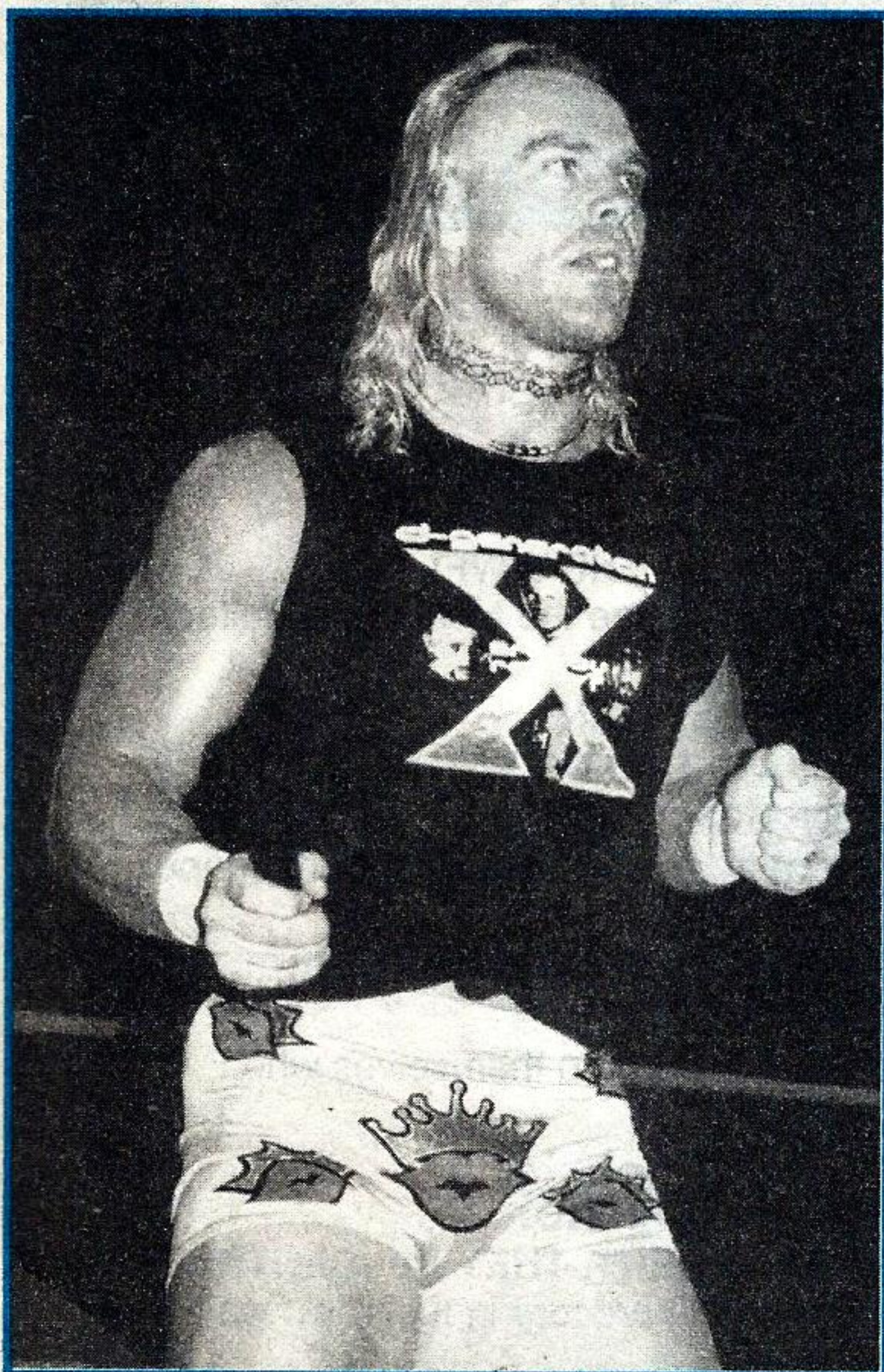
GOOD RIDDANCE

My opinion will probably be different than that of most De-Generation X fans, since I was actually stoked that Billy Gunn got kicked out of the group. They couldn't have done it a minute sooner. What kind of loser falls in love with his own butt? Give me a break.

J.R. says that Gunn is a great "pure" athlete. Well, that may be true, but he's an over-rated wrestler in my opinion.

Triple-H did us all a favor when he punked out Gunn on *Raw*. Now that "Mr. Posterior" is out of the picture, all Triple-H has too do is get rid of Road Dogg and X-Pac, and he can start DX all over again with Chyna and Shawn Michaels.

GAVIN ROTH
Boston, MA



When Billy Gunn was kicked out of DeGeneration X, there was no outcry from the degenerates at home or in the stands. Reader Gavin Roth is one fan who is glad DX dismissed the New Age Outlaw.

Douglas—he's even publicly discussed some of them—but "The Franchise" would be an unbelievable asset to ECW right now. Yeah, he might not nearly be the wrestler he once was, but he is still one of the most controversial men in this business, and having him sit at home when he could be working is a nothing less than a crime.

Let's not forget that if Douglas hadn't thrown down the NWA title all those years ago and declared himself the new Extreme Championship Wrestling champion, ECW as we know it today might have never gotten off the ground.

DAVE DORSEY
Pennsauken, NJ

SPARRING PARTNERS

The current WCW World title reign of Sid Vicious reminds me of the days when Larry Holmes was boxing's heavyweight champion. In the 1970s and '80s, Holmes was criticized by fans and reporters for defending his heavyweight crown against subpar competition. Was it Larry's fault some of his opponents couldn't fight? Of course not. Undaunted, he faced all challengers and never shirked a bout. Yet Holmes never got the credit he deserved as a champion.

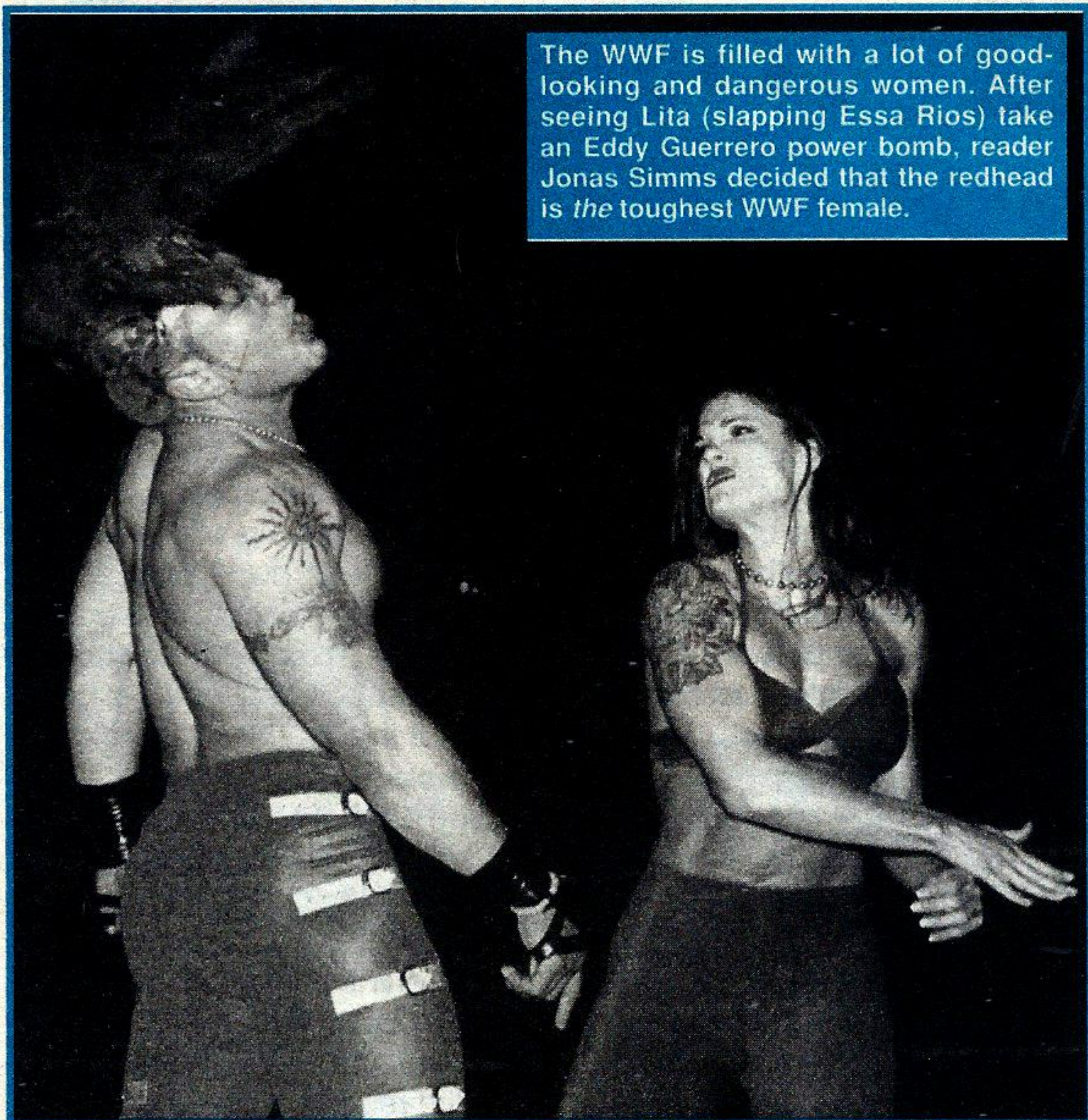
Sid falls into that category, too. Just because WCW's top stars are out or on the sideline, that shouldn't diminish what Sid has accomplished in WCW. He has put together quite a championship run and has defeated quality performers. And he has managed to hold the World title longer than any WCW wrestler has in a while.

MARK SOPOLOWSKI
Tampa, FL

ECW'S "FRANCHISE"

I hate to question Paul Heyman, but I think it's time for him to bring back ECW's most important heavyweight champion ever: Shane Douglas.

I know that Heyman has had problems with



TOUGH GIRLS

Just because she has big muscles, a lot of people in the WWF would like to believe that Chyna is the toughest woman in wrestling. I don't believe it. I saw Lita take a power bomb from Eddy Guerrero on *Raw Is War* in March that rivaled anything Vader did to Cactus Jack. Until someone convinces me otherwise, Lita is the toughest female in wrestling as far as I'm concerned.

JONAS SIMMS
Eugene, OR

PROUD OF EDDY

Please allow me to qualify this letter by telling you that no matter what Eddy Guerrero does in the ring, good or bad, he will always be my favorite wrestler. That's why I think the WWF deserves two thumbs up for allowing Eddy to be on TV, even though his elbow was severely injured.

Despite his pain, Eddy showed true fighting spirit by helping his

brothers Dean Malenko, Perry Saturn, and Chris Benoit win their matches. Besides, I think it was important that Eddy kept his face on TV. If he hadn't, he would have lost all the momentum he got from jumping from WCW. The WWF showed real class in keeping Eddy involved every week.

I'm glad to see that Eddy is already back in the ring kicking butt like he had been doing before the injury. I just hope that he doesn't have to face his amigo Dean for the light heavyweight title. I would hate to see anything come between them. Dean makes a great champion, and if he had to lose to somebody, I guess it's better that he lose to another Radical than to somebody else.

MARISSA JONES
Los Angeles, CA

AN AWESOME "500"?

Even though I am several months early and writing to the
(Continued on page 50)

Wrestler

STANLEY WESTON
Founder

PUBLISHER	Stuart M. Saks
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF	David Lenker
MANAGING EDITOR	Brandi Mankiewicz
ASSOCIATE EDITORS	Frank Krewda Will Welsh
SENIOR ART DIRECTOR	Wendy Vetter
SENIOR ARTIST	Tracy Fedorowicz
ART DIRECTORS	Joseph Kalman Todd Coleman Teresa Landis
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PRE-PRESS ASSOCIATE	David Wiesinger
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SENIOR WRITERS	Dave Rosenbaum Harry Burkett Bryan Ethier Dan Murphy
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS	Matt Brock Elizabeth A. Hunter Mitch Lucas
PHOTO ASSISTANT	Stephen Drew

Executive Vice President
Kenneth J. Gudaitis

Circulation Director
David Tyler

National Circulation Managers
Robert Nucci
Rose Ann Adolfi

Advertising Director
Sharon Liggio
(215) 643-6385

Subscription Inquiries
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WHAT'S

Happëning

By Dan Murphy

TRIPLE-H BECAME THE first rulebreaker ever to walk out of a WrestleMania with the WWF World title, due in large part to the involvement of **Vince McMahon** on April 2. Yet signs of con-

flict between "The Game" and the boss emerged in the days immediately following WrestleMania, and sources close to the situation say **Road Dogg** and **X-Pac** have already asked Triple-H to sever all

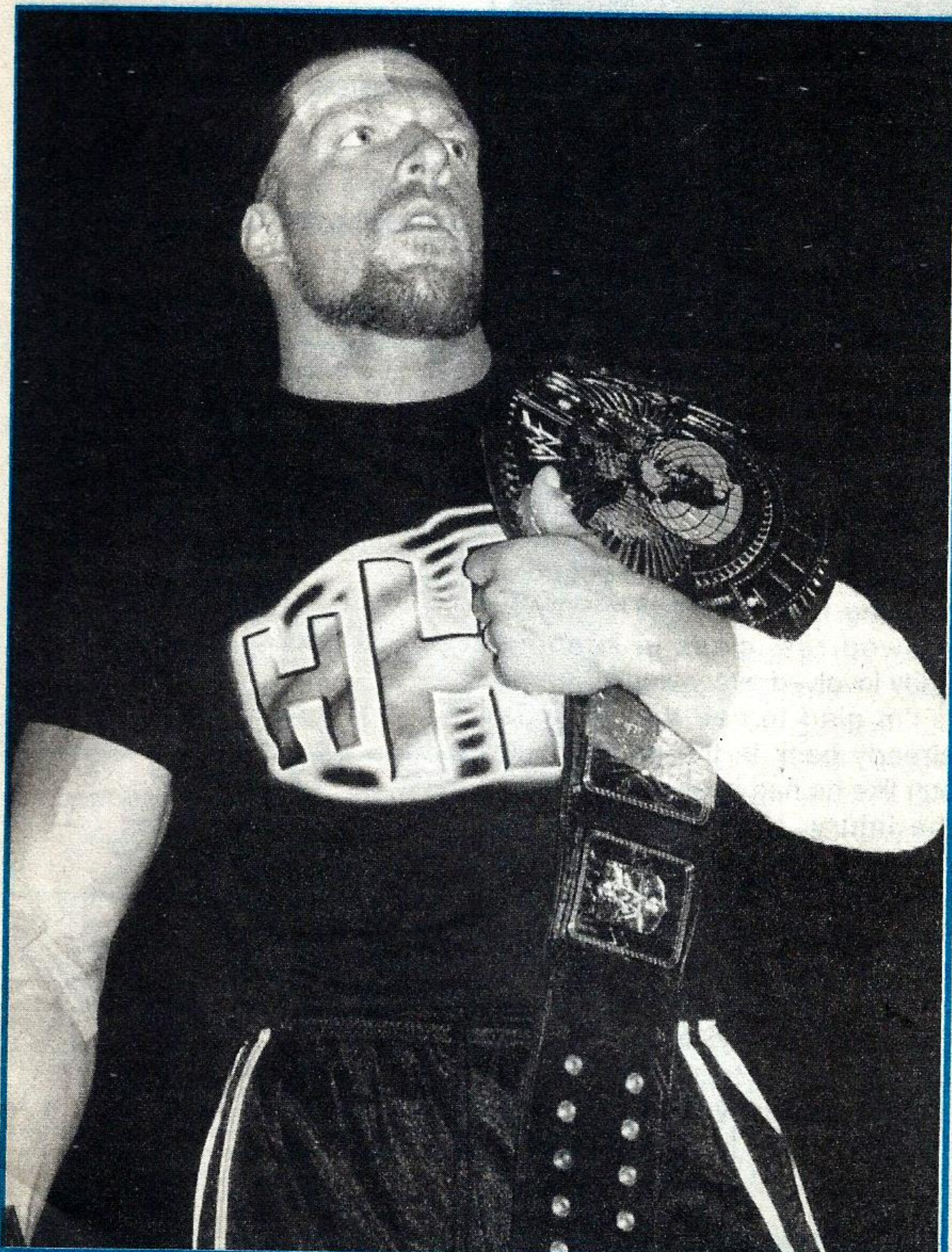
ties to the McMahon family.

"Triple-H has already proven he can win on his own," one reliable source said on the condition of anonymity. "Hanging around the McMahons will only come back to bite him in the end. I wouldn't be surprised if by SummerSlam, Triple-H and The Rock are teaming against two other guys Vince chooses to back. Hunter is better off sticking with DX than getting mixed up with that entire family."

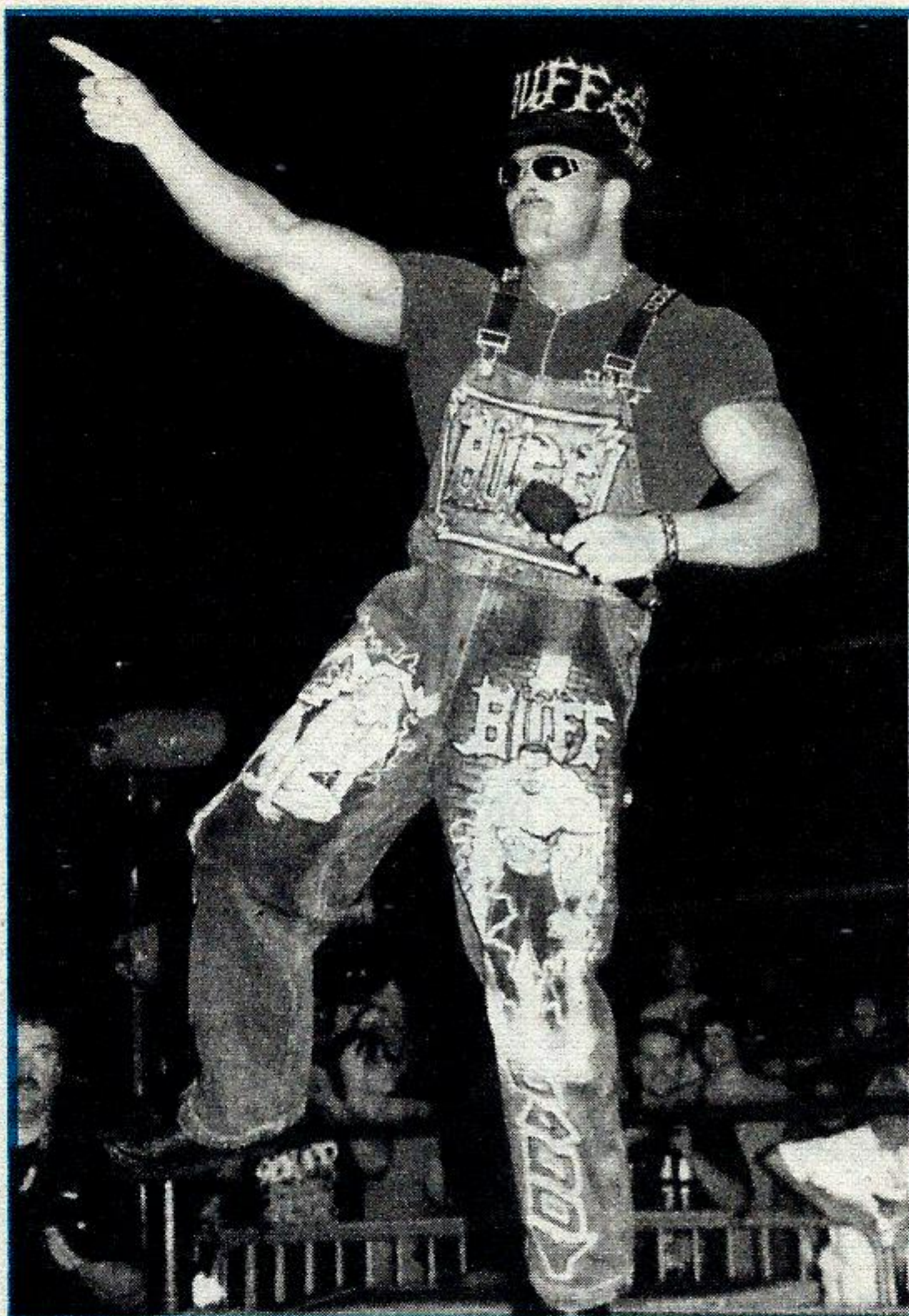
Although it has taken months upon months, Triple-H has finally won the respect of those who originally felt he lucked into the WWF title while both **Undertaker** and **Steve Austin** were sidelined with injuries. Now, with the McMahon family apparently united at his side, Triple-H seems to have a stranglehold on the WWF title.

Two other wrestlers who have earned a lot of respect are **The Dudley Boyz**—despite the fact that they dropped the WWF tag title to **Edge** and **Christian** in a breathtaking three-way ladder match (with **The Hardy Boyz**) at WrestleMania. Just weeks after **Buh Buh Ray** power-bombed **Mae Young** off a ramp and through a table on *Raw*, he and **D-Von** seemed like the darlings of the WWF when they attacked Edge and Christian and the Hardys on *Raw* the night after WM2000.

In other WrestleMania matches: **Big Bossman** and **Bull Buchanan** defeated **D-Lo Brown** and **The Godfather**; **Hardcore Holly** pinned **Crash Holly** for the hardcore title at the end of a 13-man hardcore battle royal (Crash



Those close to Triple-H are torn by his recent reconciliation with Vince McMahon. On one hand, the dysfunctional McMahon family might be a distraction to him, but his friendship with Vince should help his title reign.



Buff Bagwell is confident that the return of Eric Bischoff and Vince Russo will result in some positive changes for his career. Bagwell says he was a victim of WCW's old boys network.

regained the title the following night with the help of the **Acolyte Protection Agency**); **Test** and **Albert** beat **Al Snow** and **Steve Blackman**; **Terri** beat **The Kat** in a catfight; **Chris Benoit** won the Intercontinental title, and **Chris Jericho** won the European title (which he lost the following night to **Eddy Guerrero**) in a three-way match with **Kurt Angle**; and **Rikishi** and **Kane** beat **X-Pac** and **Road Dogg**.

Count **Buff Bagwell** as one of the WCW wrestlers who was glad to see the return of **Eric Bischoff** and **Vince Russo**. Though Bagwell has had his problems with the former **Powers-That-Be**, he says he is excited about what the return of Russo and Bischoff will mean.

"Everyone knows that Buff Daddy is the real chosen one here in WCW," Bagwell said recently. "Now that the boys are back in town, maybe a guy like me can get some title shots. I'm sick and tired of the old boys network that's been in effect around here."

Although his official capacity with WCW was not defined at press time, Bischoff will oversee WCW's creative development, and, with Russo, continue building storylines for the company. No word on whether Bischoff or Russo intends to throw his weight around in front of the camera as well.

Sure, **Miss Hancock** is gorgeous, but can she be a good manager? **Lenny** and **Rave** are possibly the only wrestlers in WCW who don't seem to want Hancock in their corner. Several wrestlers have approached the not-so-private dancer with offers, and Hancock is said to be considering several options. Rumor has it one of those options appears to have come from **Crowbar**, and **Daffney** is none

too pleased.

"Puh-lease, that girl is just a nerdy little skank," Daffney sneered. "And if I hear she's trying

to sign my men, I'll just have to claw her eyes out."

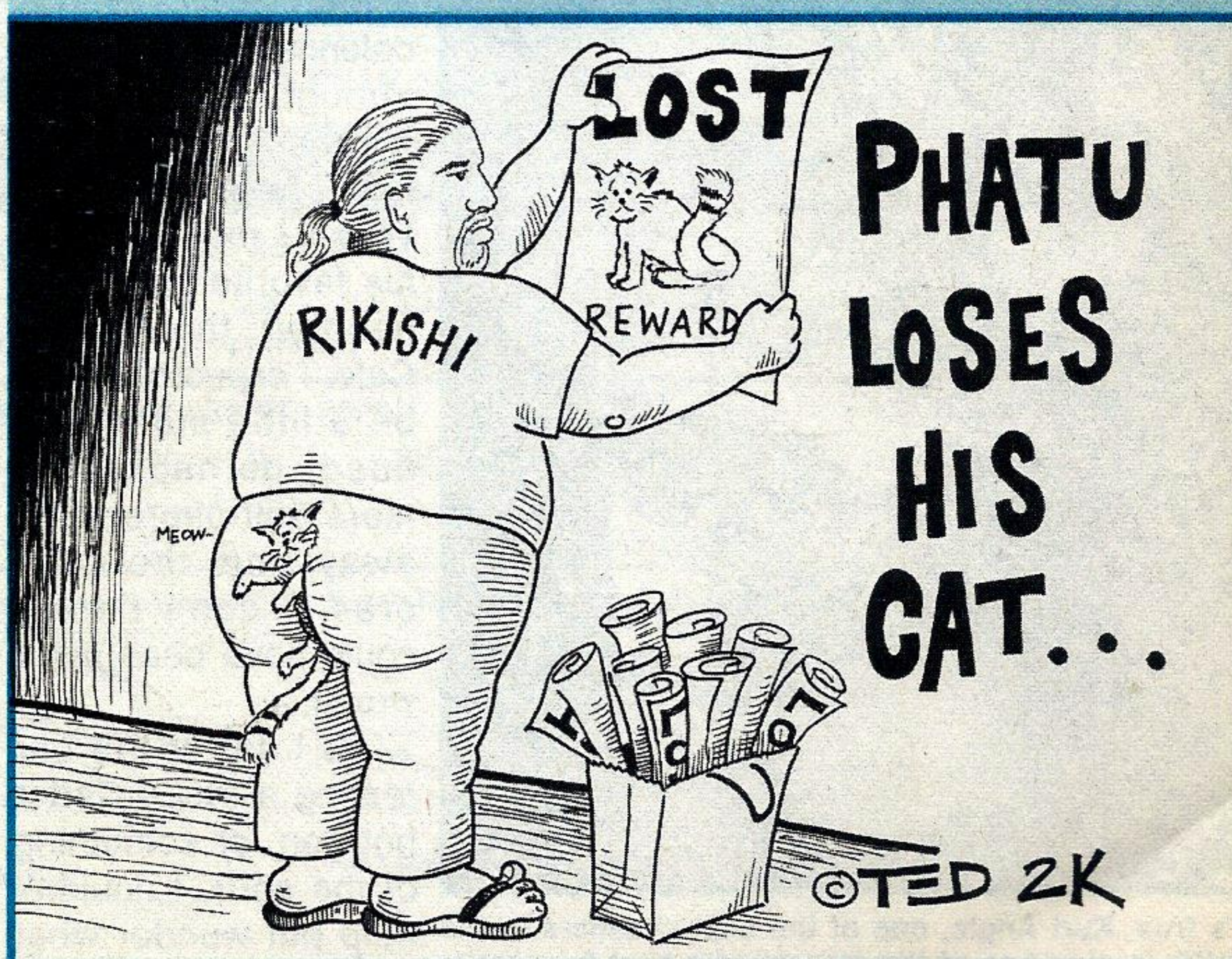
He may have been upset by **Mike Modest** on *Nitro*, but **The Artist Formerly Known As Prince Iaukea** has been one of the most dominant cruiserweight champions in recent memory. He dropped the strap to **Billy Kidman** on March 30, but proved his merit by winning it back the next night. If **TAFKAPI** can withstand the challenge of **Chris Candido**, he could soon be ready to contend for the U.S. title. Remember, he is a former TV champion. And with **Paisley** running interference, he can still pull off some upset wins.

Shawn Michaels came out of retirement to wrestle one final match on April 4. No, it wasn't in the WWF. "The Heartbreak Kid" defeated **Venom**, one of the men he has been training, in a bunkhouse brawl on a Texas Wrestling Alliance card in San Antonio.

Speaking of Michaels, has HBK heard **Mick Foley** make numerous comments to the effect that he hopes to become WWF commissioner now that he's retired?

(Continued on page 51)

THE BOTTOM LINE *By Ted Smith*



Check out Ted's other wrestling cartoons at wrestletoons.com

NO Holds Barred

with Will Welsh

"IN THE NAME of all competitors, I promise that we shall take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules that govern them, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the

glory of sport and the honour of our teams." So says the Olympic Oath.

Doesn't sound anything like former Olympian Kurt Angle ever swore to abide by, does it?

For all his talent, Kurt Angle has been a disappointment. Yes, he's been the unofficial Eurocontinental champion, a feat only Jeff Jarrett had previously accomplished, but when you look at how Angle won and has defended those belts—through underhanded means—he simply hasn't been impressive. When I met Angle at his favorite New York hangout, the All-Star Cafe, I expected him to be a little more subdued, perhaps a bit more self-deprecating away from the cameras. I don't think I could have been more wrong.

As I sat at the bar (eating a Vince Carter hot dog, or something of the sort), I couldn't help but wonder what made this all-American boy from Pittsburgh,

Pennsylvania, go bad. When I first saw Angle on TV and saw how charismatic and charming he *could* be, how athletic he obviously was, and how attractive he was to the females in the crowd, I thought, *Did the Wheaties people ever miss the boat on this guy. If positioned right, he could have become the next Bruce Jenner—a real American Olympic hero.* Then he opened his mouth.

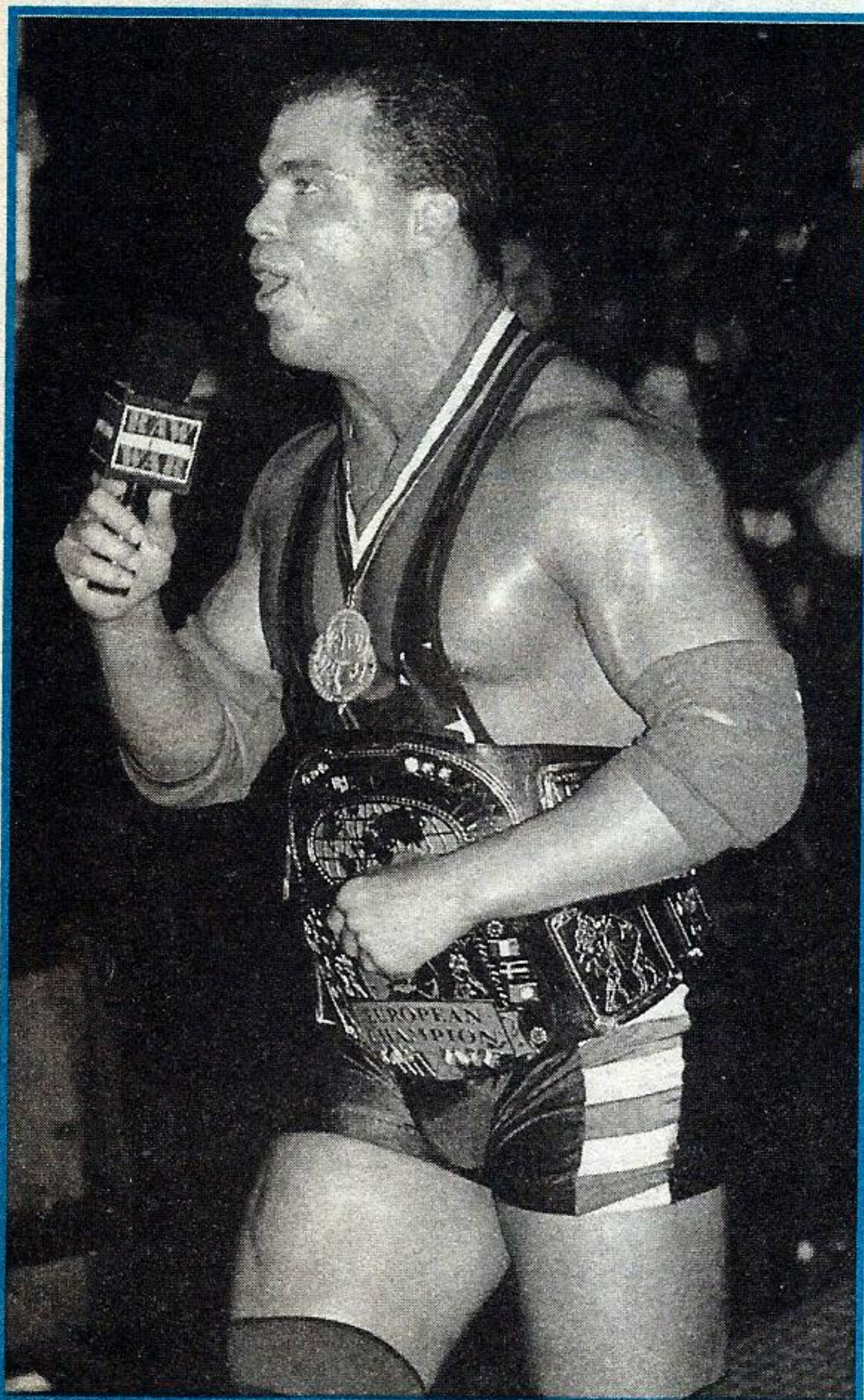
So there I was, in the middle of Manhattan, surrounded by paraphernalia from some of sport's greatest legends, when I was suddenly hit so hard from behind that the food in my mouth got spewed all over the bar. After I sheepishly apologized to the bartender and cleaned myself off, I turned around to see who the rude S.O.B. was that just about knocked me out, and, of course, it was Kurt Angle.

"Geez, Will, I'm sorry." Angle laughed as he spoke. "I didn't mean to ruin your lunch or anything. What are you eating there, dead pig? Let me get you another one of those yummy fat injections."

Great, I thought, *he's just like he is on TV, an arrogant jerk.*

"Hey, Kurt, how are ya?" I asked. He didn't answer. His attention was already distracted by an autographed Yogi Berra catcher's mitt. It was one Berra wore while a

(Continued on page 54)



It's true. Kurt Angle, one of the best wrestlers in the WWF, is also one of the federation's best braggarts. No longer suited for the structured setting of Olympic competition, Angle feels right at home in the WWF.

By
Harry
Burkett

Heroic Spin on Bob Backlund

BOB BACKLUND WAS a hero of mine. I don't think I'm compromising my journalistic ethics with that statement, because I'm sure all my colleagues would admit to having a hero. There were wrestlers I liked more than Backlund and several others I thought were more entertaining, but no one deserved more respect than the long-time WWF World champion in my eyes.

He represented the innocence of youth that I think so many young fans are missing today. He was quiet and unassuming, and he never bragged about his accomplishments. He won the NCAA Division II 190-pound amateur wrestling championship in 1971 and was one of the most successful grapplers in the history of North Dakota State. When he turned pro, it was assumed he was destined for greatness.

There was a lot of hype surrounding Backlund in the mid-1970s, but none of it was of his own making. It was the result of money-hungry promoters anxious to cash in on Backlund's fame. Vince McMahon Sr. did just that when Backlund defeated Superstar Graham for the WWF title in 1978. Other than a one-week interruption, thanks to Antonio Inoki, Backlund was the champion for almost six years. He rarely took a shortcut and never schemed to retain the championship. Lou Thesz, who faced the Minnesota native in Japan, told me that Backlund was one of his toughest opponents ever.

A quick scan through the portion of our photo archives covering those years reveals a heroic figure. Backlund posing with Bruno Sammartino. Backlund raising the World title belt aloft after another successful defense. Backlund presenting a group of high school wrestlers with plaques.

Is this the same man who insists on being called *Mr. Bob Backlund*? Is this the same man who made a laughable run for President in 1996? Is this the same man

whom Jim Ross now describes as being "crazier than a pet coon"?

He hasn't changed as much as you might think. Consider this: If Backlund had remained the shy, straightforward all-American icon, would he have a spot in today's WWF? Look back to Backlund's comeback in 1992. He was the same good 'ol Bob, but where was he? Flat on his back, being pinned by Doink the Clown. Backlund finally had enough of clowns using rubber flowers to squirt poison in his eyes and turned bad in 1994, establishing the persona we know today.

Backlund still believes in the same moral values that once made him a great champion—no swearing, no gratuitous sex, and no unnecessary showboating. It's

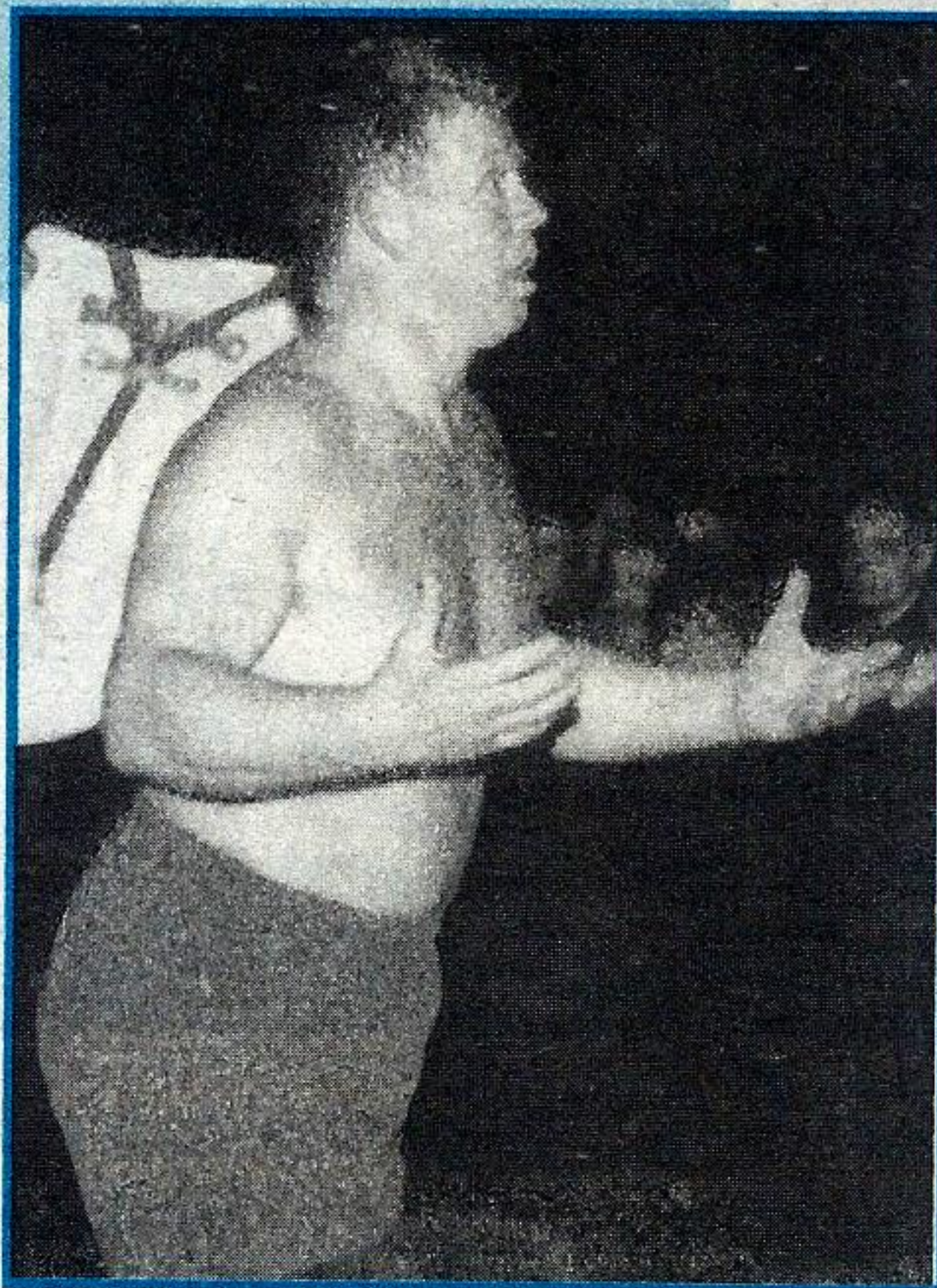
just that in this day and age of the anti-establishment hero, those moral values get you absolutely nowhere and may actually be a detriment.

Many people think Backlund is making a fool of himself by serving as a mentor to Kurt Angle and pitting his chicken wing against Tazz' *katahajimi*. Besides, isn't he running for the House of Representatives? Shouldn't he be better than the society he criticizes?

Backlund still believes in fair play as a virtue, but he thinks it's

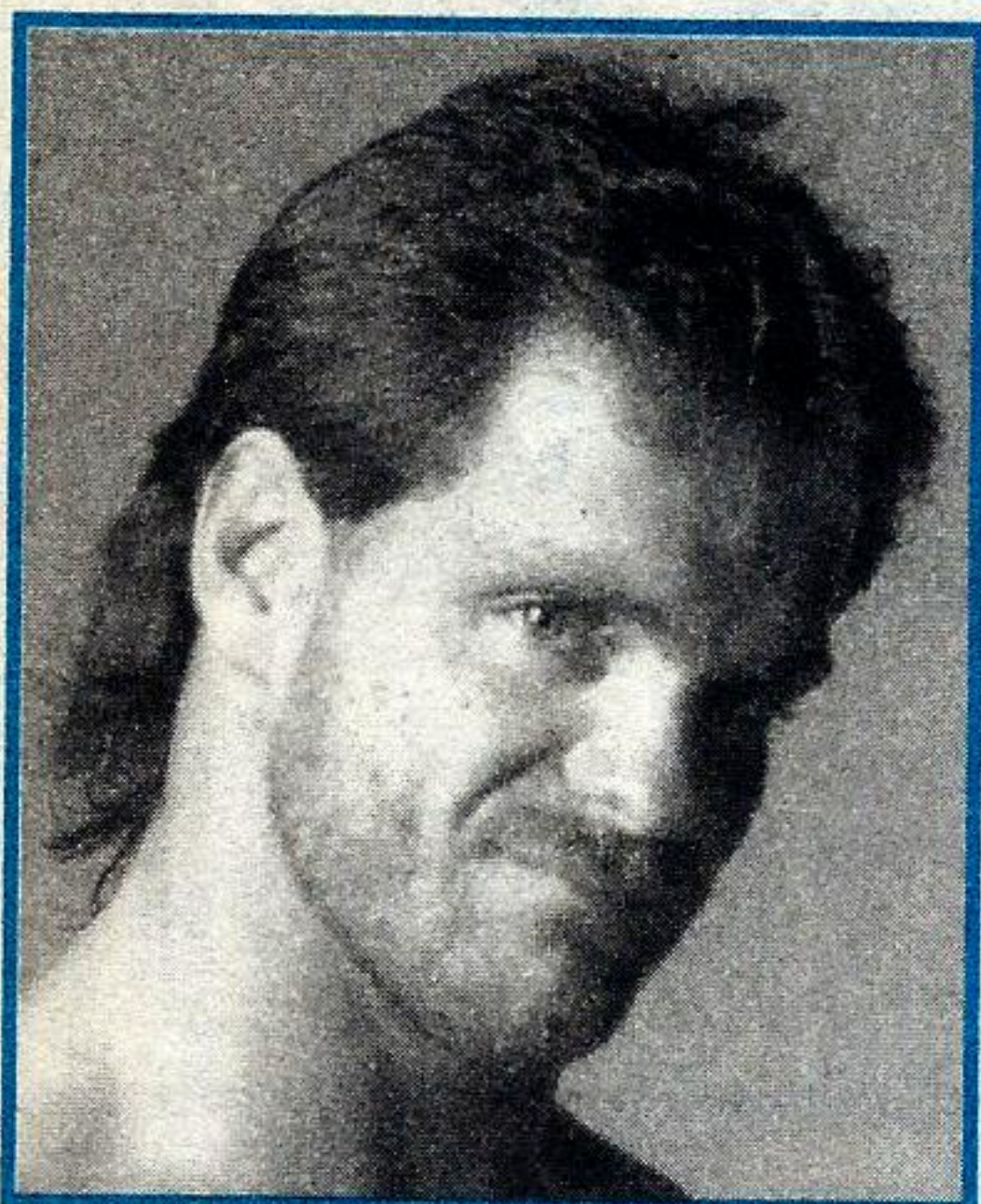
a non-factor in the WWF. According to Backlund, WWF wrestlers and fans no longer deserve a true American hero. WWF fans, and society as a whole, no longer recognize moral conviction and personal honor. Fans would rather hold signs expressing their sexual attraction to Mae Young than cheer a hero. Backlund subscribes to the same school of thought as Bret Hart and Kurt Angle, both of whom believe fans can no longer distinguish between right and wrong.

I don't agree with everything Backlund is doing in the WWF. I just think it's sad when the image of the all-American hero is regarded as a parody instead of the ideal. □



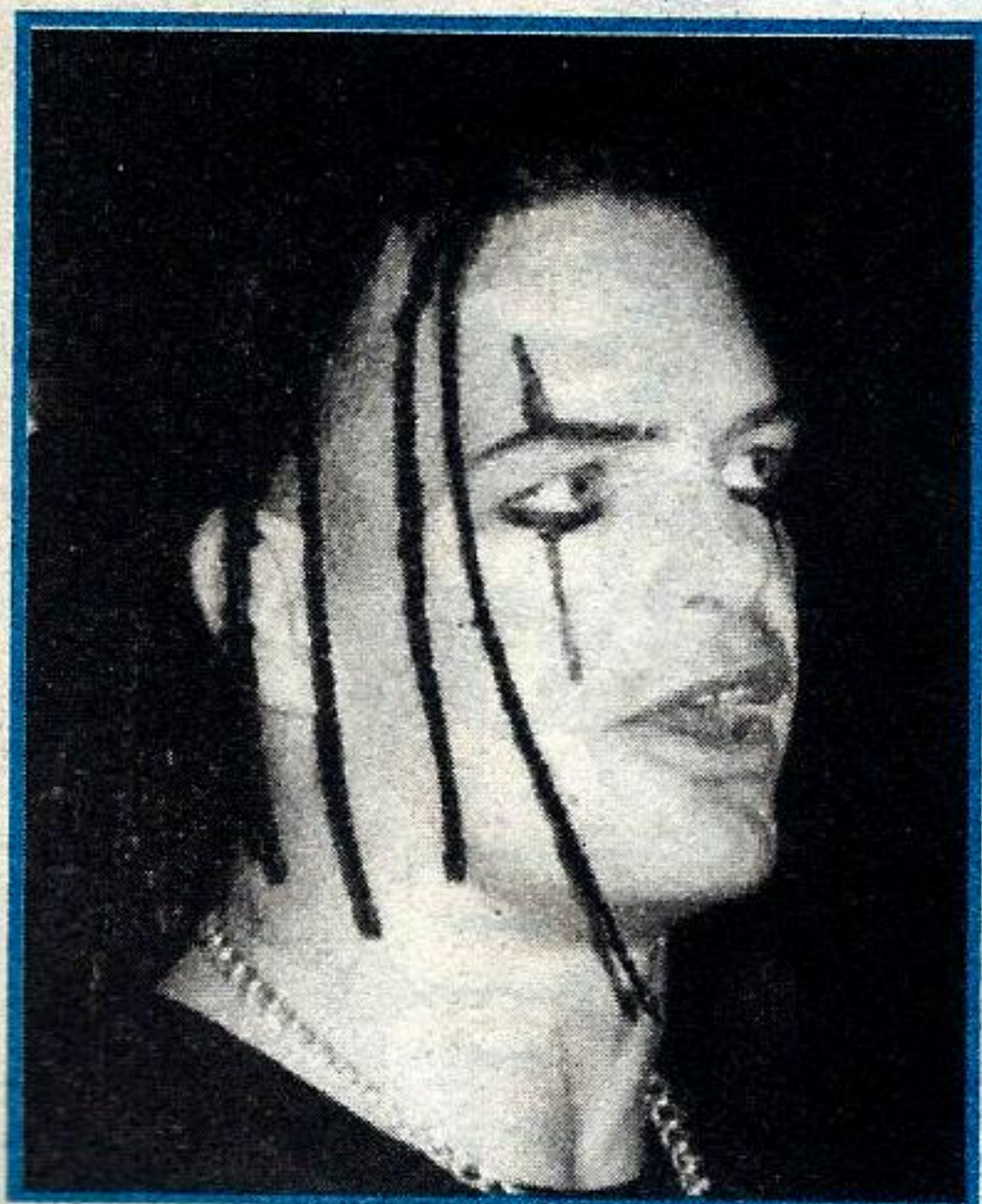
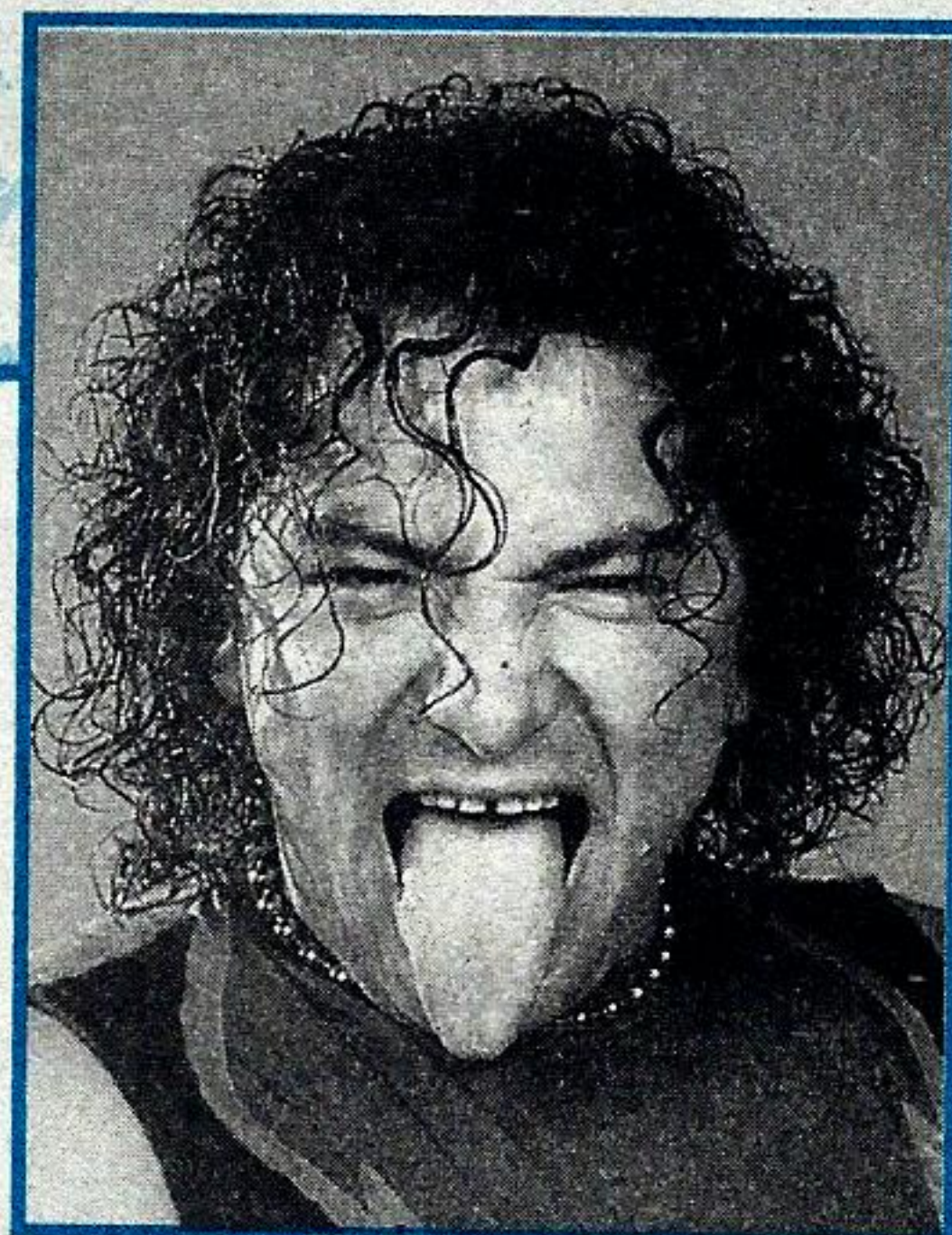
Backlund: all-American zero?

THUMB UP



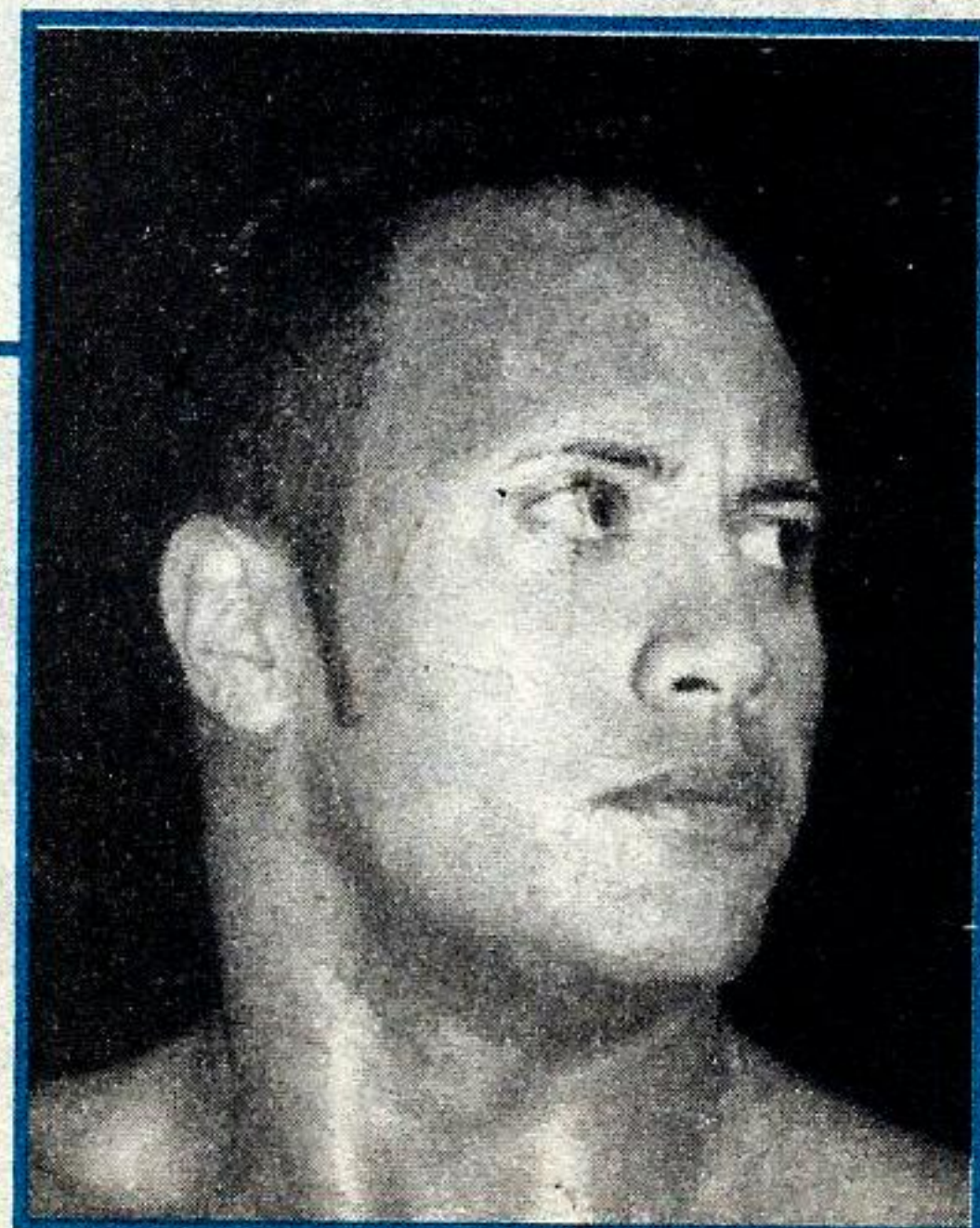
Thumbs Up to Chris Benoit. It's looking more and more like The Radicals made the right move when they jumped from the WWF to WCW. Less than two months after the group made the move, Dean Malenko struck gold by beating Essa Rios for the WWF light heavyweight title. Benoit did even better three weeks later. He won the Intercontinental title—the second most important championship in the WWF—by defeating Kurt Angle and Chris Jericho in the first fall of a triple threat match at WrestleMania. Does “The Canadian Crippler” belong among the WWF’s elite? He showed at WrestleMania that he does.

Thumbs Up to Super Crazy. We still can't figure out how he managed to win the ECW TV title with the odds stacked so squarely against him. Cyrus did everything in his power to ensure Rhino would be the next TV champion. For example, when Sandman forfeited his TV tournament semifinal match at Living Dangerously, Rhino got a free ride into the finals. Super Crazy had to wrestle a tough match against Little Guido that featured interference by Sal E. Graziano. Crazy won. Then, in the final match against Rhino, Super Crazy had to overcome all kinds of interference by Cyrus' gang before winning. It was a great victory by Super Crazy, who looks like a fine champion.

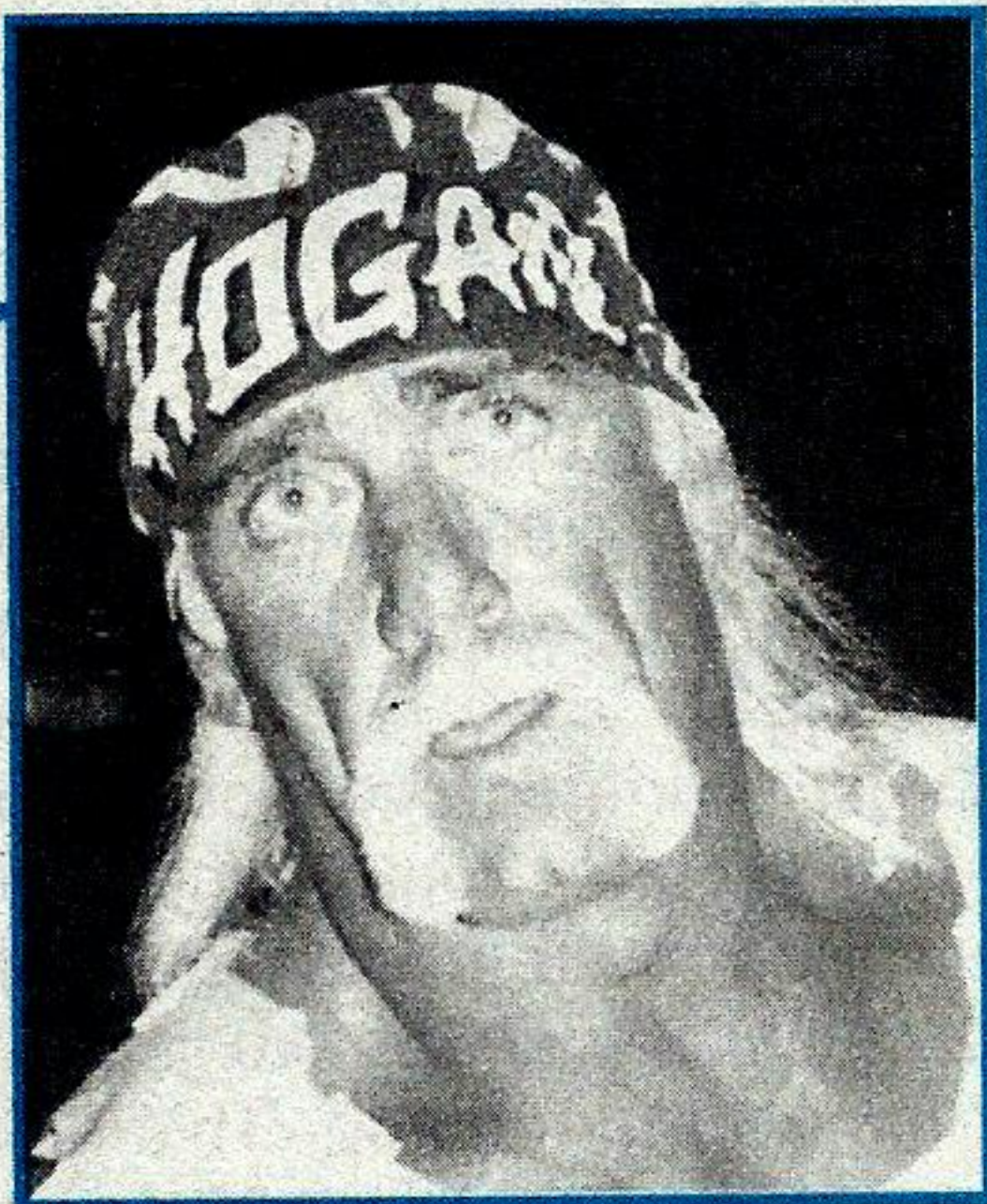


Thumbs Up to Vampiro. First of all, he deserves a lot of credit for his amazing victory over Fit Finlay in that falls-count-anywhere match at Uncensored. Finlay offered a serious test to Vampiro, but Vampiro showed guts and determination in winning the match. Later, however, Vampiro showed a friendlier side when he helped Sting win his comeback match against Lex Luger. Vampiro prevented Elizabeth from striking Sting with a baseball bat, then used the bat to floor Luger. Finally, in a show of friendship, he embraced Sting in the ring. If you ask us, this looks like an incredible alliance.

Thumbs Up to The Rock. What *hasn't* this guy done? It seems as if every time we open a newspaper or turn on the TV, The Rock's visage is staring back at us—eyebrow raised, of course. Not only did The Rock make an entertaining appearance on *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno*, but in a tour de force, he hosted *Saturday Night Live* and was responsible for that show's highest ratings in nearly a year. The Rock, along with Triple-H, Big Show, and Mick Foley, has escalated the WWF to new heights. All these guys deserve credit for making the WWF the top federation in the world.



THUMB'S Down



Thumbs Down to Hulk Hogan. Is there anything the "Hulkster" won't do to hog the spotlight? Sid Vicious should have thought again when he and Hogan agreed to look out for each other. Hogan only looks out for himself. Oh, sure, Hogan's interference led to Vicious beating Jeff Jarrett at Uncensored, but did Sid really need Hogan's help? Fans are clearly tired of Hogan. After he beat Ric Flair at Uncensored, most of the fans at American Airlines Arena simply turned and left the building. One day later, Vicious turned against Hogan, and we can't blame him. There is no such thing as a Hogan alliance with anybody. Hogan's only friend is himself.

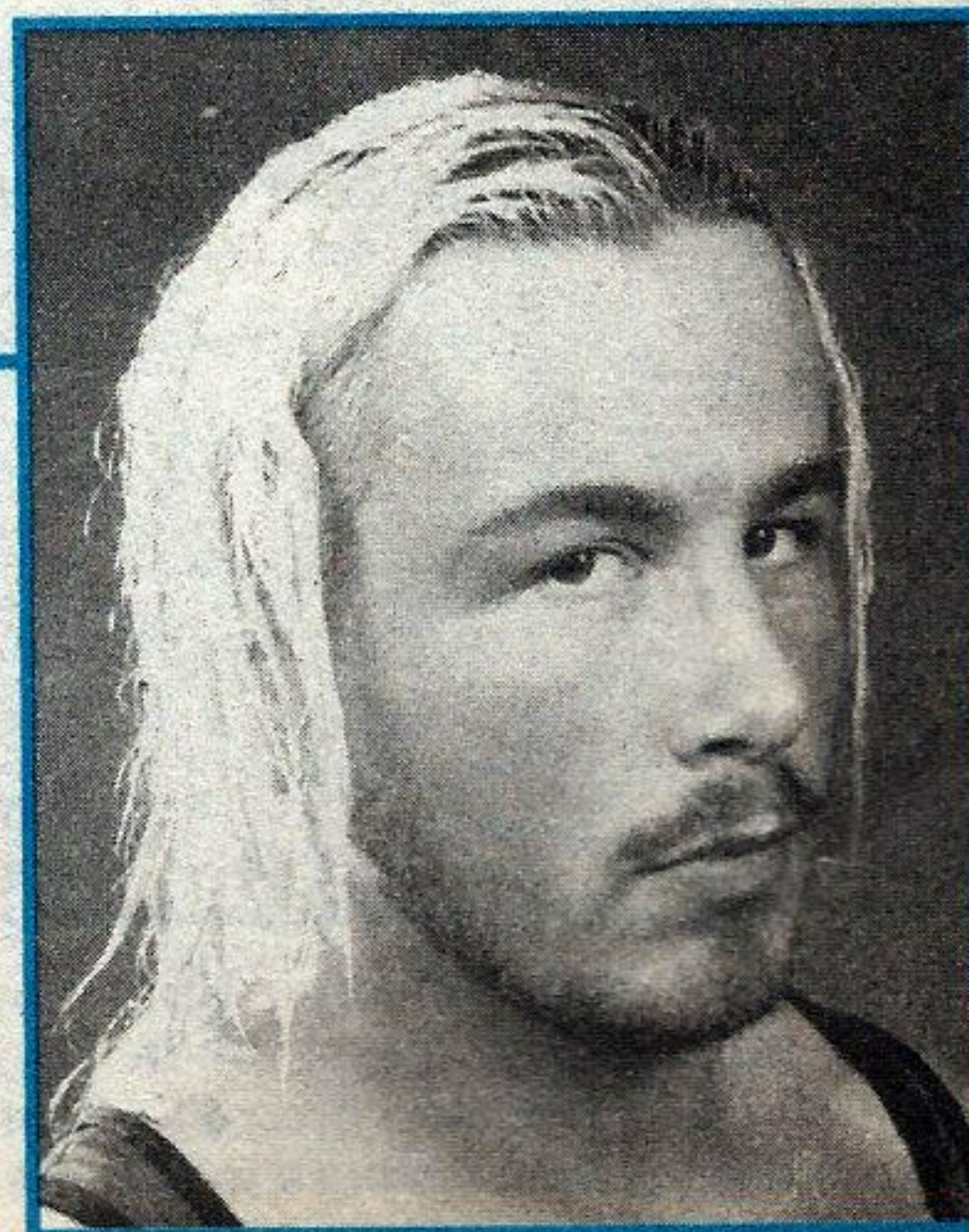
Thumbs Down to Francine. We thought there was at least one permanent partnership in ECW: Francine and Tommy Dreamer. Boy, were we wrong! Francine not only betrayed Dreamer and joined Raven, but is now taking responsibility for basically everything good that has ever happened to Raven and Mike Awesome. If we were The Sinister Minister, we'd be very wary of this femme fatale. After all, this is a woman who not only left her man, but also joined the man's arch-enemy. We're talking about Dreamer and Raven, of course. Now Raven and Dreamer are at

war again, and Francine is at the center of their feud. Undoubtedly, Francine likes when men fight over her.



Thumbs Down to Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley. Talk about a spoiled brat! We had to agree with Triple-H when he asked, "What the hell kind of family did I marry into?!" The ungrateful rich girl called out her mother, Linda McMahon, at *Smackdown* in late-March and accused her of being a bad mother. Among Mrs. McMahon's supposed maternal deficiencies: forcing Stephanie to make her own bed and not buying her a hot car for her sweet 16th birthday. When her tirade was finished, Stephanie slapped her mother and knocked her down. What a disgrace! Doesn't Steph know it's a sin to hit your mother? Doesn't she have any respect at all?

Thumbs Down to Steve Corino. He keeps telling us he's not hardcore. He keeps telling us that he won't resort to brawling and the crazy, dangerous acts that so many ECW wrestlers commit. But now we know all about the real Steve Corino: He isn't hardcore against the men ... he's only hardcore against the defenseless women he attacks. Corino's verbal and physical abuse of Lori Fullington at Living Dangerously sure seemed hardcore to us. Of course, later on, he lost to Dusty Rhodes. One question, Corino: Are you or are you not a tough guy? If you're hardcore, prove it ... against a man.



CORRESPONDENTS

Reports

Miami, FL (Correspondent—Duane Long): The scheduled strap match between Hulk Hogan and Ric Flair actually got started at the end of the Sid Vicious-Jeff Jarrett match, as Hogan ran in to help Sid defeat Jarrett while keeping the Harris brothers and the returning Scott Steiner at bay.

Flair officially started the match with an unfair advantage when Scott Steiner cracked a guitar over Hogan's back. Steiner had been beating on Hogan when Flair finally made his way to the ringside area and took over where "Big

Poppa Pump" left off. Hogan wasn't going down so easily, though, and quickly mounted a comeback.

Hogan dazed Flair to the point at which the "Nature Boy" fell face-first onto the mat. Hogan then picked up Flair, placed him in the corner, and pounded Flair's head until he opened up a bloody gash on his forehead. The sight of blood didn't stop Hogan's onslaught. Flair squirmed out of the ring, only to be whipped at ringside by Hogan's manager, Jimmy Hart. When he returned to the ring, he

was greeted by a strap-wielding Hogan, who delivered a series of blistering blows across Flair's back. Flair retaliated with a series of chops, but Hogan reciprocated with some hard chops of his own.

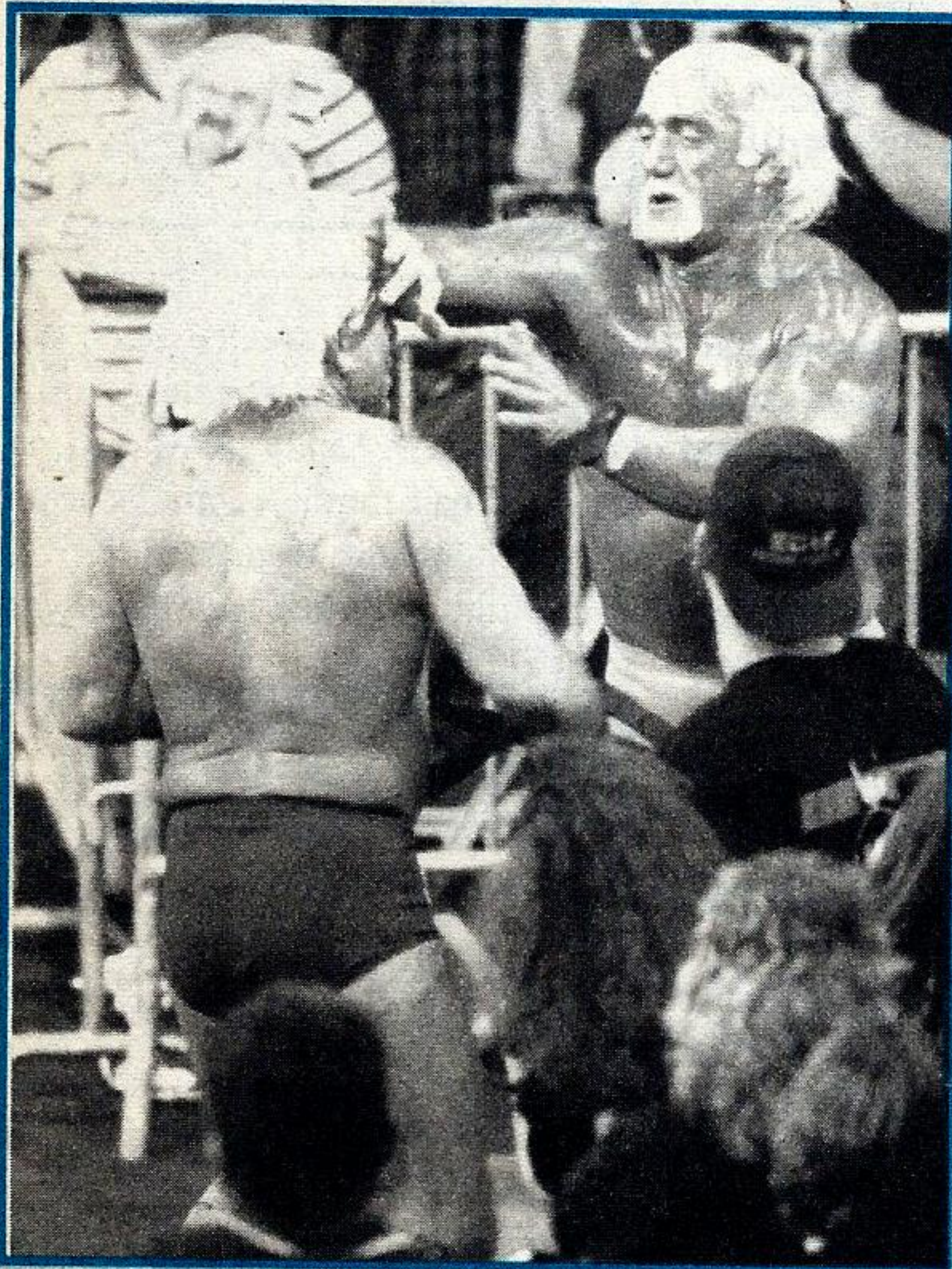
Hogan seemed to be in complete control as Flair begged him to show mercy. This was all a ruse, though, as Lex Luger interfered on Flair's behalf, whacking Hogan with a chair and opening a cut on his head. Flair attempted to touch all four turnbuckles, but could only get three before Hogan stopped him. Later, when Hogan attempted to touch all four turnbuckles, Flair

stopped him by hitting him with a foreign object. Flair immediately went down for a quick two-count on Hogan.

Luger interfered one more time for Flair and got booted in the face for it. Hogan then drove his big boot into Flair's face before flattening him with a legdrop. This enabled Hogan to get a three-count on Flair. After that, he made the obligatory rounds of touching all four corners to officially win the strap match.

In other bouts: WCW cruiserweight champion The Artist (with Paisley) pinned Psicosis (with Juventud Guerrera) ... Norman Smiley & The Demon beat Lane & Rave ... Bam Bam Bigelow beat The Wall by disqualification ... Brian Knobs defeated WCW hardcore co-champs Three Count to win the title ... Kidman & Booker (with Torrie Wilson) defeated The New Harlem Heat (with Kash & J. Biggs) ... Vampiro pinned Dave "Fit" Finlay ... Don & Ron Harris beat WCW World tag team champs The Mamalukes (with Disco Inferno) to win the title ... Dustin Rhodes defeated Terry Funk in a bullrope match ... Sting pinned Lex Luger (with Elizabeth) in a lumberjack cast match ... WCW World champ Sid Vicious pinned Jeff Jarrett.

Chincoteague, VA (Correspondent—Harry Burkett): Vinnie Gambini, smoking a fat cigar, began his remarks at the Chincoteague Center by criticizing Independent Pro Wrestling Al-



The strap match between Hulk Hogan and Ric Flair spilled outside the ring at times. Hogan went on to not only pin Flair, but also drag the "Nature Boy" along as he touched all four corners to win the bout.

liance tag team champions Cueball Carmichael and Jimmy Cicero for their decision to leave his Little Italy organization. He said Corporal Punishment and The Bruiser would punish them accordingly.

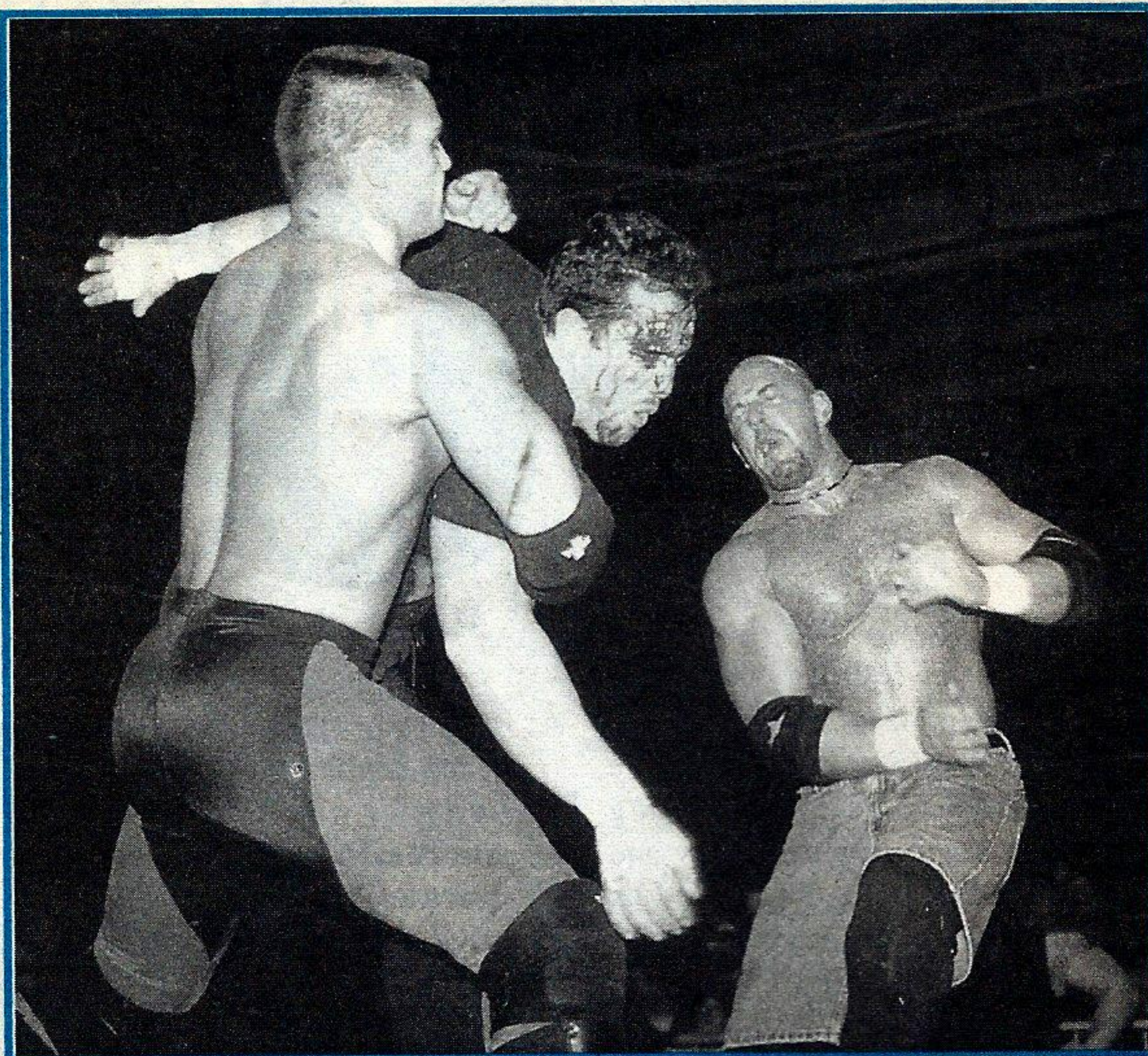
Gambini's tirade was interrupted by Carmichael and Cicero, who granted Punishment and Bruiser an immediate title match. They jumped into the ring and hammered Gambini's thugs until both men bailed to the arena floor. The tag champs then ran both men into ringposts.

Punishment rolled back into the ring and caught Carmichael with a vicious kick to the head as he tried to enter. He punched and kicked Carmichael between the shoulder blades, grabbed him by the hair, and tagged Bruiser. Gambini got in Carmichael's face with some trash talk as Bruiser floored Cueball with a double-axhandle off the top rope.

Bruiser tagged the Corporal, who became distracted when Cicero began chanting with the crowd. That gave Carmichael time to elbow Punishment in the mid-section and scamper to his corner. After Carmichael's tag to Cicero, Bruiser rushed into the ring to aid his partner, but was caught by Cicero's Michinoku driver. A four-way melee ensued as Carmichael clotheslined Punishment, and Cicero hit Bruiser with a DDT for the victory.

In other bouts: Samu defeated Ray Storm ... Rustee "The Foxx" Thomas beat Lady Anarchy ... Big Slam defeated Flex Phenom ... Earl the Pearl pinned "Sodapop" Ronnie Zukko ... Adam Flash defeated Danny Rose ... Vernon Porter pinned Jacey North.

Danbury, CT (Correspondent—Frank Vitucci): Lance Storm and Justin Credible walked away from a wild three-way dance at Living Dangerously as ECW World tag team champions, surviving against the team of Tommy



Lance Storm and Justin Credible double-team Tommy Dreamer en route to regaining the ECW World tag team title at Living Dangerously.

Dreamer and Masato Tanaka as well as the reigning tag team champions, Raven and Mike Awesome.

Early on, Raven put Dreamer through a table, knocking him out of action for a few minutes. All three teams battled for several minutes, with none of them getting an advantage. The first shocker of the match came when Tanaka back suplexed Awesome through a table to set up his roaring elbow finisher. This pinfall on Awesome was the first time the ECW World champ was pinned cleanly since he regained the title in December. Tanaka didn't have much time to celebrate, as Credible leveled him with a blistering whack with his cane.

Later, The Impact Players started to make their dominance known. Credible and Storm double-teamed Dreamer, pounding him until he was a bloody mess. Storm continued the attack on Dreamer with a DDT and got a quick two-count. Storm also dazed Tanaka with a piledriver before

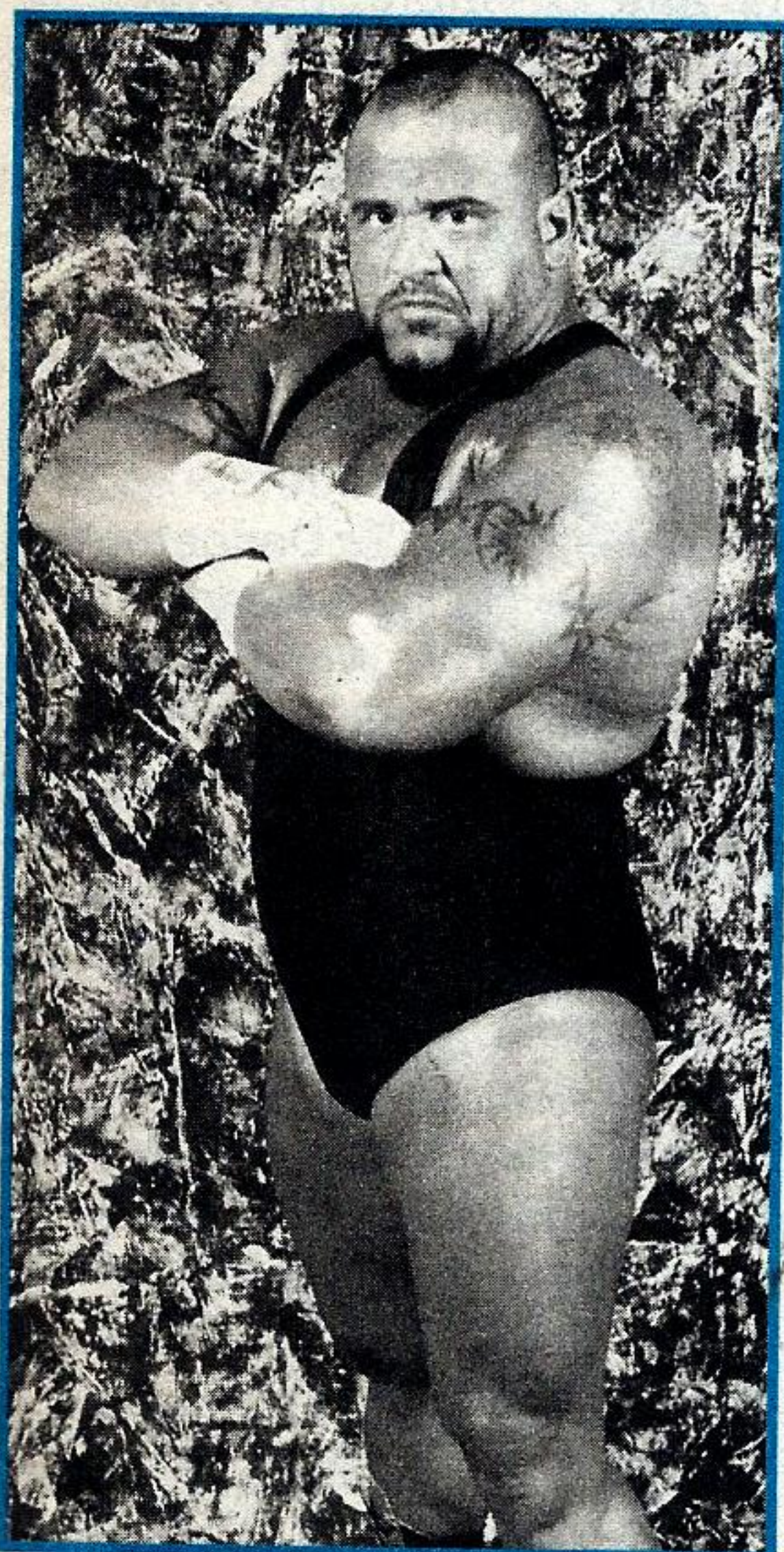
he and Credible knocked out Dreamer with a stuff piledriver. With Dreamer hurting, Storm pinned him to give The Impact Players the win and the World tag team title.

In other bouts: Dusty Rhodes pinned Steve Corino in a bullrope match ... C.W. Anderson & Bill Wiles (with Lou E. Dangerously) beat Danny Doring & Roadkill (with Elektra) ... ECW World champion Mike Awesome pinned Kid Kash ... Nova & Chris Chetti defeated Gedo & Jado ... Mahoney pinned Kintaro Kanemura ... **In semifinals matches of the ECW TV title tournament:** Super Crazy beat Little Guido (Rhino received a bye when his scheduled opponent, The Sandman, forfeited the match) ... **Finals:** Super Crazy pinned Rhino to win the ECW TV title tournament. □

Send your reports to:
CORRESPONDENTS EDITOR,
Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034

YOU Asked Us

Q: "My question is for Tazz. Tazz, all the WWF announcers have you pegged as a street thug whose low center of gravity and pit bull-like strength give you an advantage over larger competitors. Do you think they're right about why you've had so much success despite being only 5'9" and 248 pounds?"—Mike Ghest, Kissimmee, FL

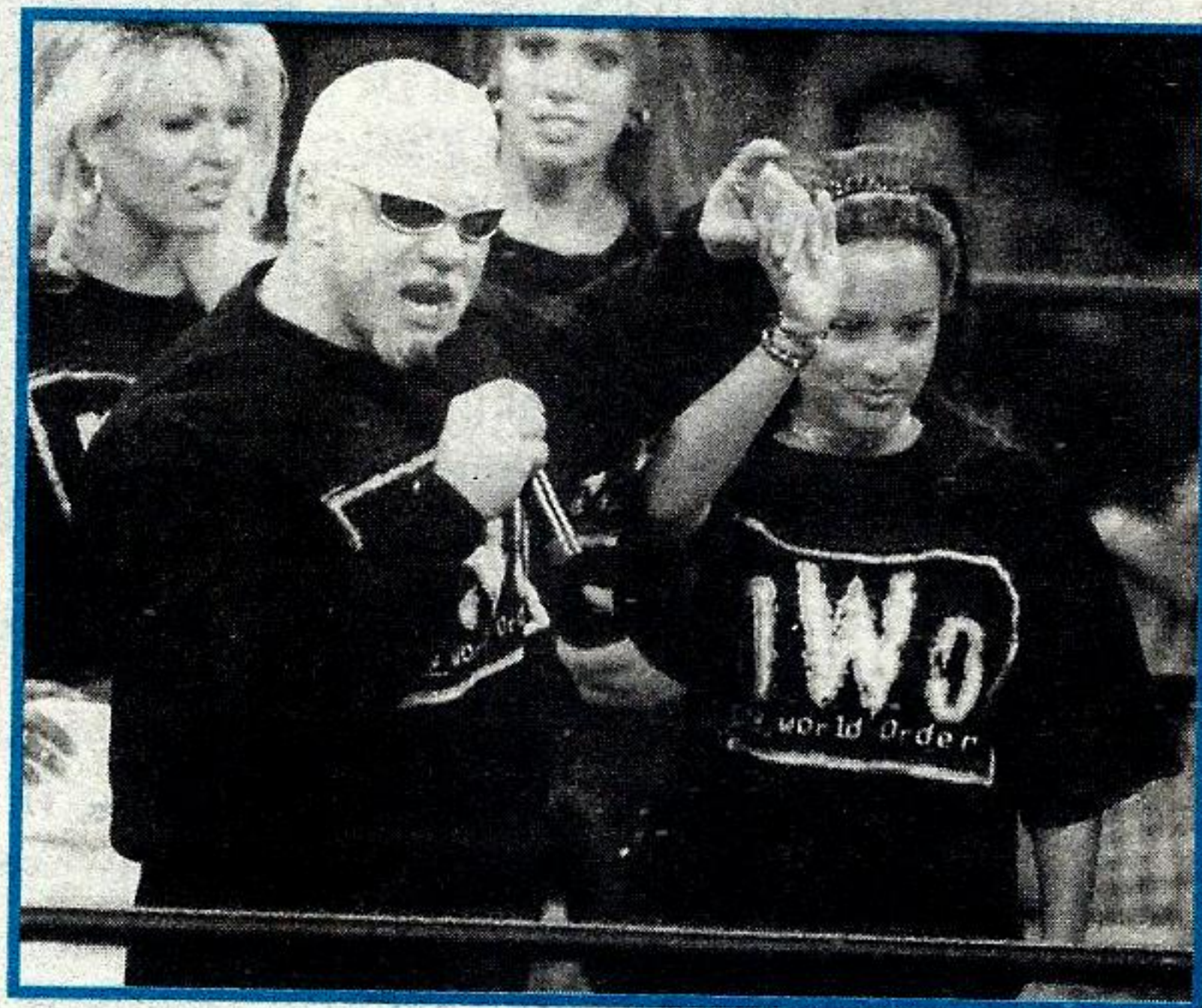


Tazz is wrestling's consummate over-achiever. He's been fighting stereotypes his entire career, and he's proven that if you have the desire, size truly doesn't matter.

A: "Listen, brotha," Tazz replied, "I'll tell you why I'm successful: It's because I don't give a damn. Every time someone told me I was too small, I wrapped them up and choked them out. Every time someone told me I didn't have a look, I made them look at me through two black eyes. Every time a promoter told me to go home and think about working on the docks, I went out to their ring and manhandled the best guy they could feed me. So if all these WWF announcers want to say I'm successful because I'm a thug, big deal; I am a thug. That just fires me up even more. And, Mike, if that makes me a pit bull, so be it, brotha. I guess I'm a pit bull."

...

Q: "Scott Steiner is one of the most outrageous male chauvinists in the sport today, yet he is always trailed by a bevy of beautiful women. I want to ask 'Big Poppa Pump' where he gets his women, why he thinks women flock to him like they do, and if he has ever been denied by a woman, because I know that I'd deny



Scott Steiner (showing off one of his hooches) didn't like Patrice Shrader's question. Steiner doesn't take lip from anyone, let alone a "fat piece of garbage," as he lovingly called Shrader.

him!"—Patrice Shrader, Toronto, Ontario

A: "Sounds like you've got a bunch of sour grapes, Patrice," Steiner answered. "And don't you worry where 'Big Poppa Pump' gets his hooches. You'd never make it into the places where I meet my girls; that's for damn sure. Besides, you're an act. I know you want me to put you in my bedroom Steiner recliner. You can forget about that dream, though. See, I got a picture of you in my mind already. You've got to be a fat piece of garbage who eats all her meals at the Sizzler—just another below-average fan who loves to chow down on fatty foods while pretending to know

(Continued on page 55)

Introducing

JET JAGUAR

By Will Welsh

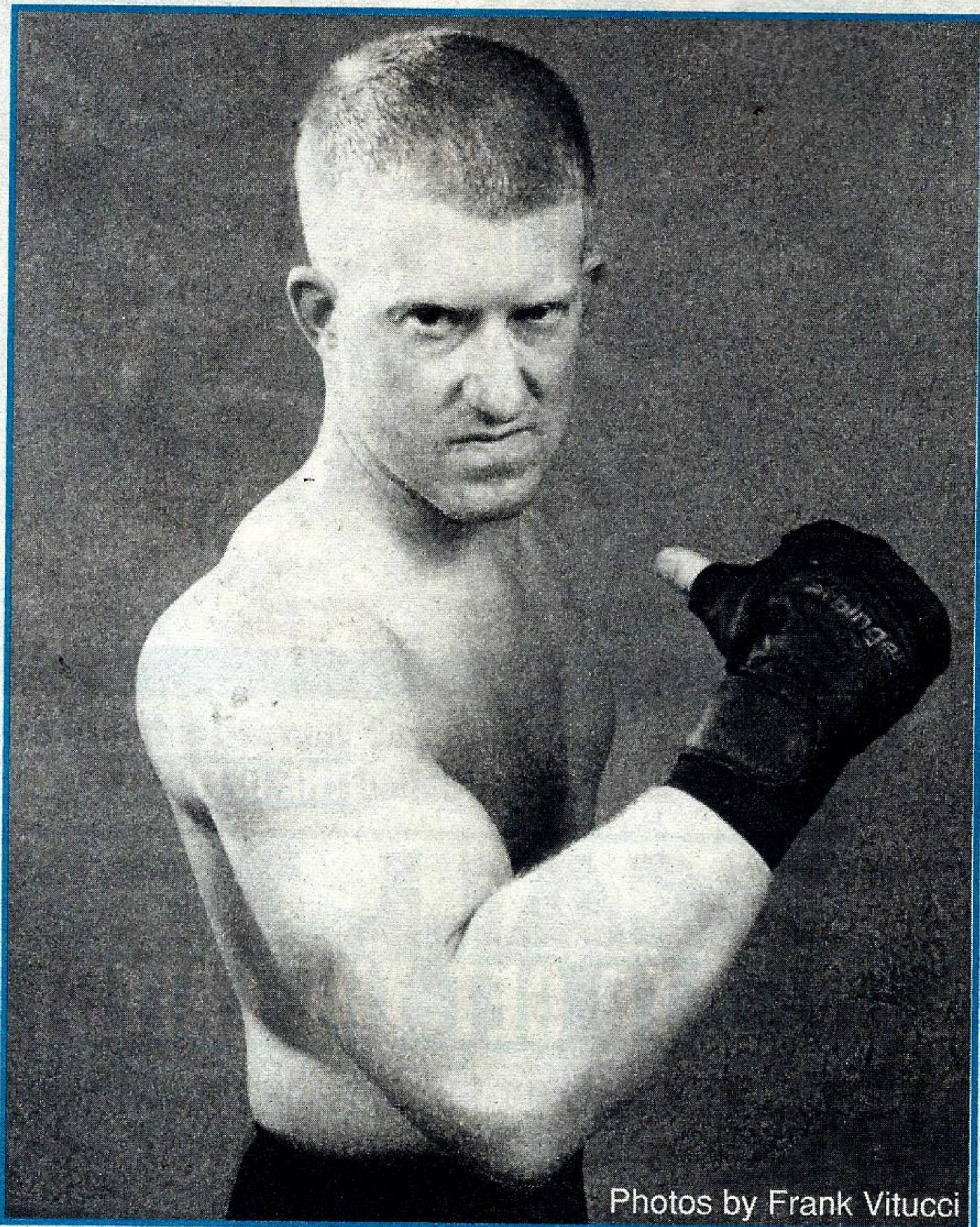
RHINO. MIKE AWESOME. The Big Show. Jet Jaguar. Jet Jaguar?

Yes, Jet Jaguar. Like Rhino, Awesome, and Show, Jaguar wrestles very much like his name suggests he would. He's fast and violent, like a jet loaded with a payload of missiles, and he likes to think he's as agile, light, and dangerous as a jaguar stalking antelope in the wilds of Africa. Jet Jaguar. The name says a lot, but not as much as the man himself.

"I'm the best damn light heavyweight in South Florida," Jaguar boasted as he drove around Orlando and its happening tourist attractions. "See all these people? They're here to see Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Shamu, and other garbage like that. They don't realize that one of the most entertaining and technically proficient wrestlers to ever set foot inside a ring is sitting at a red light right in front of their very eyes. They'll know it one day, though. I guarantee they'll know it one day."

That's a lot of brash talk coming from a 5'7", 175-pounder who has only been wrestling for four years. Unlike most 27-year-old wrestlers who go spewing off at the mouth at every opportunity, however, Jaguar can actually back up some of his boasts.

After leaving his native Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, in hopes of finding a cushy marketing job in Orlando's thriving business sector, Jaguar saw an advertisement for Dean Malenko's wrestling school in nearby Tampa. With his interest peaked, Jaguar ditched the suit-



Photos by Frank Vitucci

A lot of light heavyweights try to deny the fact that they are light heavyweights. Not Jet Jaguar. He relishes being on the lighter side and brags (perhaps a bit too much) about being one of the best light heavyweights on the independent scene

and-tie look, made the 80-mile trek to Tampa, and began training. Before long, pursuing a career in marketing became secondary to pursuing a career in wrestling.

"Malenko's school was rough," Jaguar said, "but I can't imagine training under anyone else. He puts you through your paces—that's for sure. At the time, he was feuding with Rey Misterio Jr. over the WCW cruiserweight title, and because I was similar to Rey in size and height, I became Dean's whipping boy. He beat the hell out of me, but I also learned a lot while taking those beatings. I mean, those beatings are one of the reasons why I'm so great."

"Jet's always been a loudmouth, but that's just him," Malenko said when questioned about his former student. "I'll never forget the day I first met him. I asked him, 'So why did you leave Wilkes-Barre?' He responded that a town that cold couldn't handle a guy as hot as him. Right there and then, I knew that he had the confidence to become a good wrestler. All he needed was the proper training."

Malenko's schooling certainly comes shining through in Jaguar's matches. Jaguar, who mainly wrestles in Florida's IPW Hardcore Wrestling, is methodical but fast on his feet and as effective on the mat as he is in the air. He's a well-rounded wrestler whose repertoire encompasses aspects of many disciplines. From power brokers to high-flyers to submission specialists, Jaguar has shown the ability to wrestle and defeat virtually anyone.

"He's flat-out brilliant," said Sir Ronald J. Niemi IV, leader of the devious 911 Inc., of which Jaguar is a member. "You should see how he just whizzes by everyone, how quickly he gets behind an opponent and drops them with a bulldog or takes them out with a top rope frog splash. That's why I wanted him as a member of my team. Not only does he have the attitude I look for in a wrestler, but he has the ability, too. I bet he

could even take out those two muscle-bound galoots Phi DeKappa U if he wanted to."

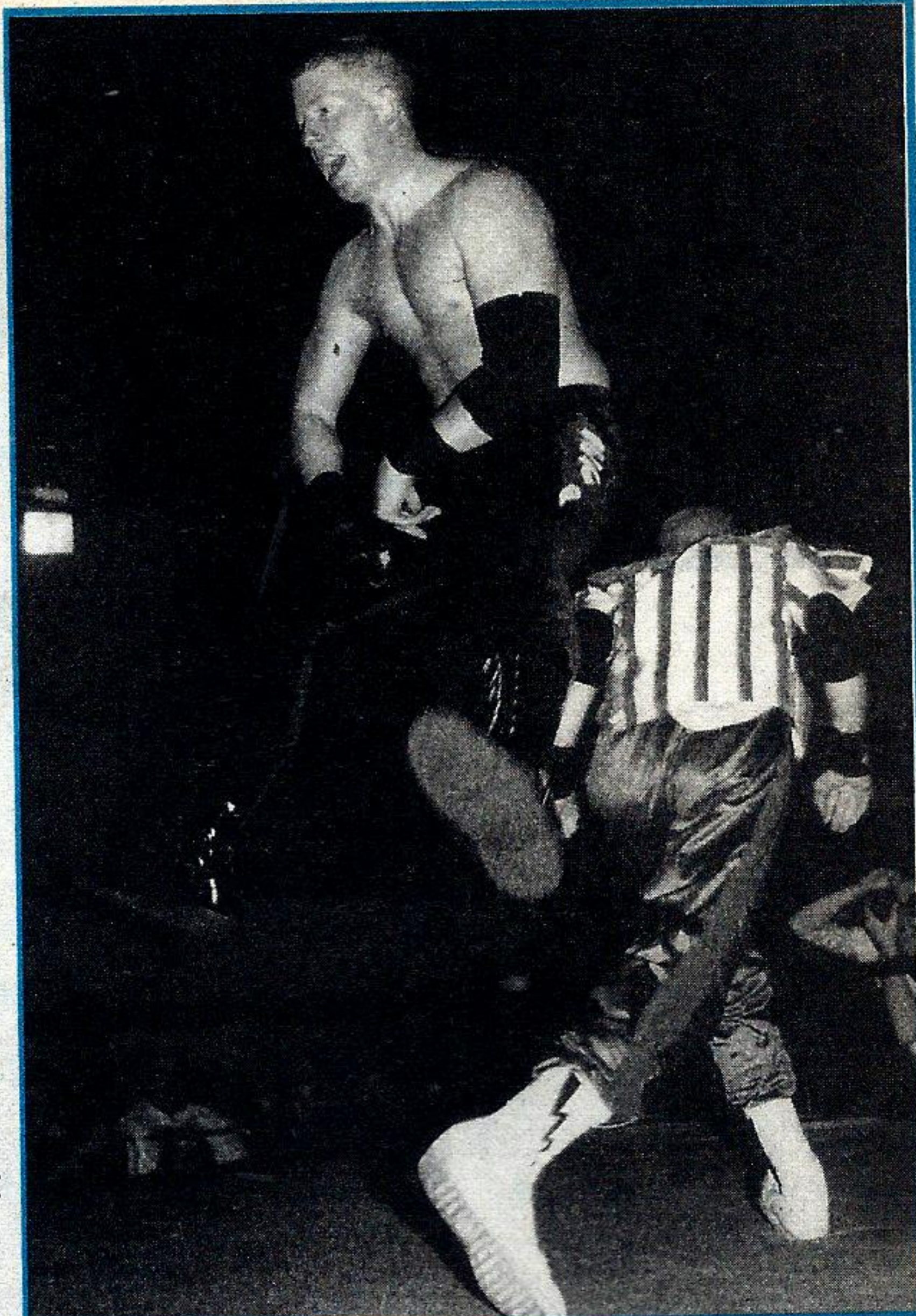
Niemi might be overestimating Jaguar's potential when he says Jaguar could take out the mammoth Wentworth twins on his own, but, of course, Jaguar doesn't have to face them by himself. IPW heavyweight champion "Marvelous" Mike Sullivan is also a member of 911 Inc., and he believes that he and Jaguar comprise one of the most dangerous duos in the sport.

"This is how it is," Sullivan said. "Jet's the man when it comes to

the light heavyweight ranks, and I'm the man when it comes to the heavyweight ranks. Together, we can demolish any poor soul who gets in our path. We are that good."

It's hard to deny Sullivan's rather boastful words when he is indeed the heavyweight champ and Jaguar is the light heavyweight champ, having beaten arch-rival Jeff Peterson for the title. The fact that they have crooked referee "Honest" Eddie Edwards on their side doesn't help matters for IPW's fan favorites, either.

"Jaguar doesn't impress me that much," said IPW light heavyweight contender "Uptown" Frankie Capone. "The only reason he even has a chance against Jeff and me is because he has the help of the heavyweight champ, a corrupt referee, and an unscrupulous manager. Let him do it on his



Jet Jaguar takes to the air and leapfrogs Jeff Peterson, the man he recently defeated in Florida to capture the IPW Hardcore Wrestling light heavyweight title.

own. Then I'll be impressed."

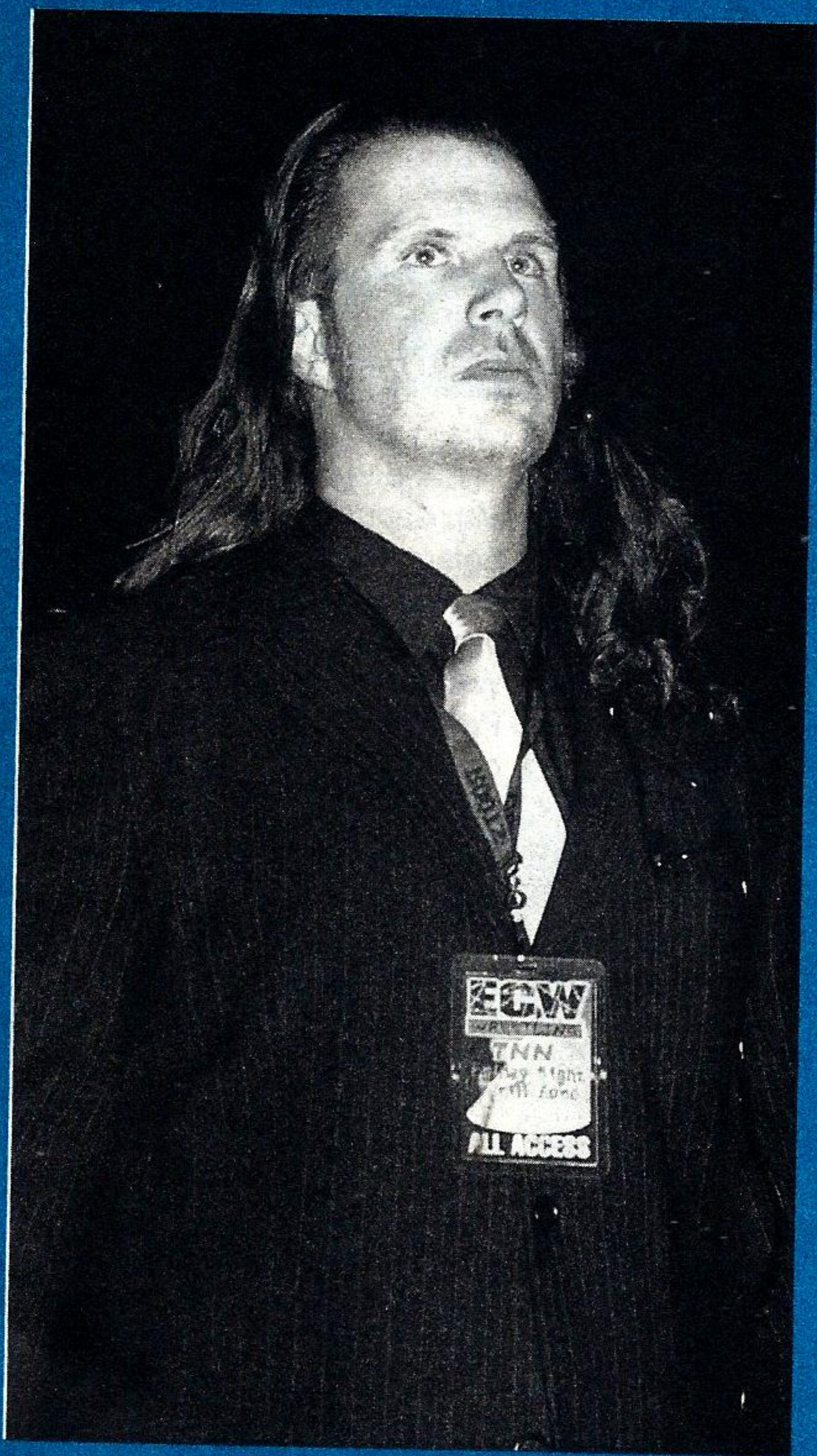
Capone might not be impressed with Jaguar, but WCW has been. Before WCW made all its cutbacks earlier this year, Jaguar had signed a development deal with WCW and was training at the Power Plant in hopes of debuting on *Nitro*. Although that deal didn't pan out in the end, Jaguar has hopes of going back to WCW, or to the WWF and ECW, for that matter.

"I'll get another shot at the big time," Jaguar said, "but until that happens, I'm going to continue to make life hell for other independent light heavyweights. One day, all those people who drive past me when I walk around Orlando ... one day, all those people are going to be slamming on their brakes trying to get a picture and an autograph from me, the best light heavyweight wrestler this sport has ever seen." □

Q

CYRUS

A



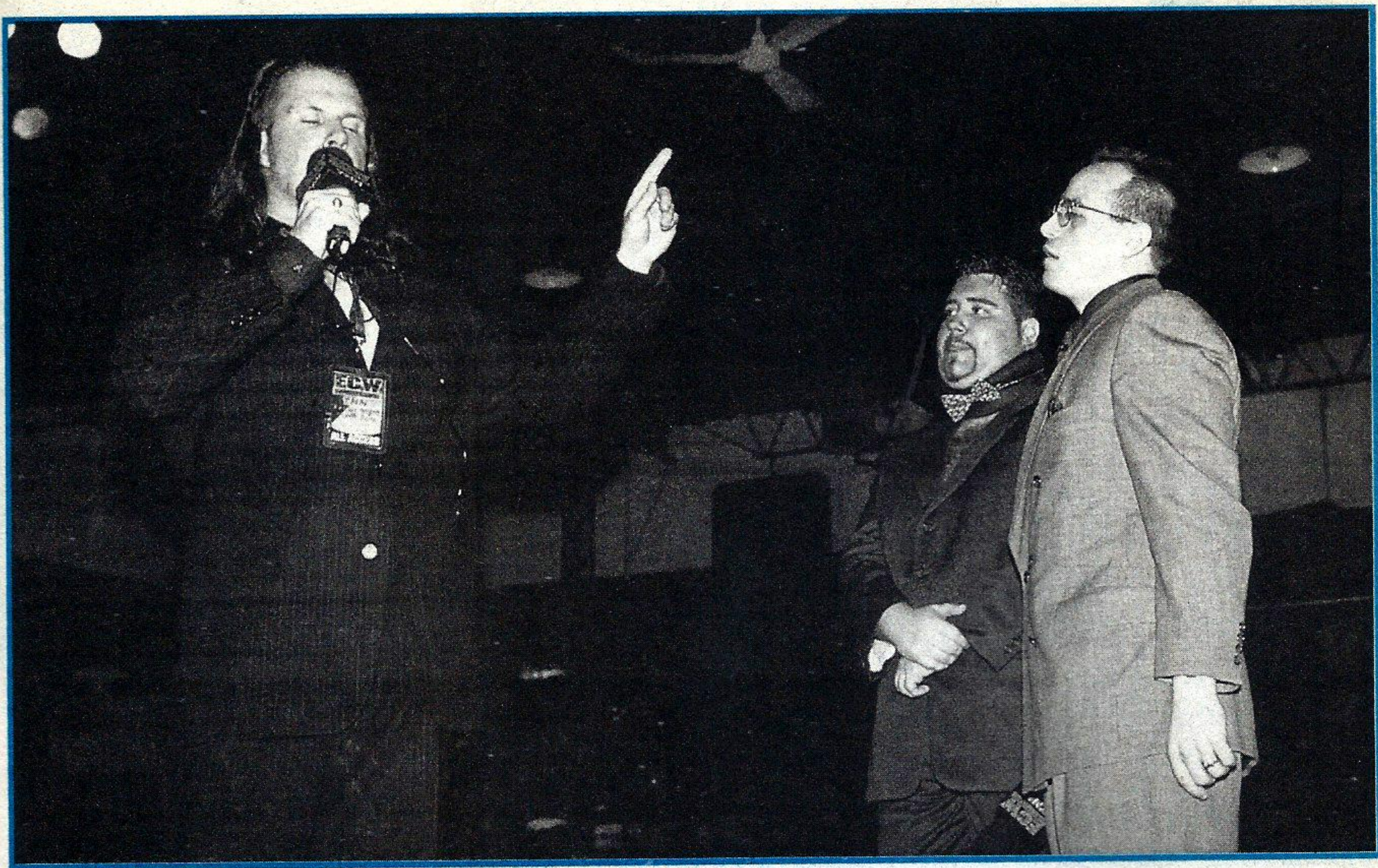
WHO DOES CYRUS work for? Is it ECW? Is it The Nashville Network? Contacts within ECW and TNN still aren't sure. Only one thing is certain: Cyrus is looking out for Cyrus.

If TNN did hire Cyrus as an official liaison to ECW, the decision makes sense. He's very familiar with the inner workings of the hardcore federation. He also managed The Acolytes and The Truth Commission in the WWF and is an experienced wrestler. TNN couldn't have recruited a bureaucrat with a more impressive wrestling resume.

But does TNN realize Cyrus is a megalomaniac? Being a commentator on ECW pay-per-views isn't good enough for him. He wants to replace Joel Gertner in the color position on TNN. Cyrus has been working feverishly to have Gertner terminated, but so far he's failed in his attempt.

He was also unsuccessful in determining who would become the next TV champ. Cyrus did force Paul Heyman to strip the title from the injured Rob Van Dam and to begin a tournament to crown a new TV champ. His condescending message to Heyman sums up his cavalier attitude: "Bring me the ECW TV championship belt ... and a cup of coffee!" Heyman brought the TV belt and smacked Cyrus in the face with it. He didn't bring the coffee.

When Super Crazy upset Rhino in the finals of the TV title tournament, Cyrus was furious. All his scheming had gone for naught. Once he had calmed down, Cyrus lobbied THE WRESTLER to secure an interview. Senior Writer Harry Burkett made plans to meet Cyrus in his "lavish" office at TNN headquarters in Nashville. At the last minute, Cyrus said his office was being repainted, and he arranged to meet Burkett at Jack's Motel on Interstate 40.



The partnership between ECW and TNN may not be a good one, as is shown by the relationship between Cyrus and ECW. He often interrupts *ECW On TNN's* opening (above). Only recently has Joey Styles tried to stop him (below).

Q: This must be a drastic change for you, Cyrus. Sitting in a plush office must be much more accommodating than this motel room. But I do like the name plate on your desk.

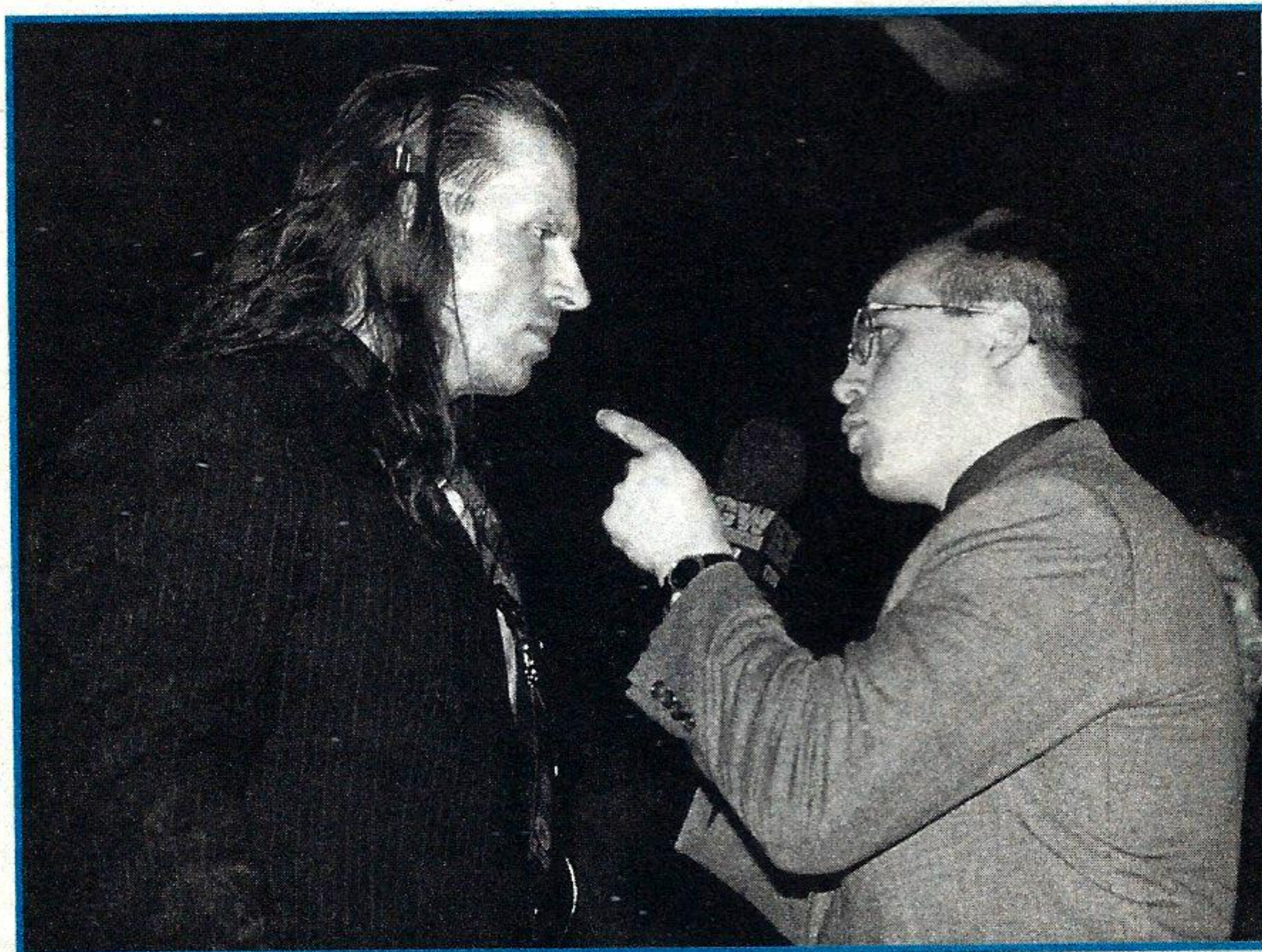
A: I try to be professional at all times, regardless of the circumstances. As much of a dive as this place is, it must seem like the Taj Mahal compared to your editorial offices.

Q: *Touche*. I have to ask you about your responsibilities as a representative of TNN. I see you're wearing your TNN badge with pride even now. Who offered you the position as liaison between ECW and TNN?

A: No less than TNN President David Hall, of course. Actually, the executives at Black Rock ...

Q: By Black Rock, you mean the headquarters for CBS, the parent company of TNN?

A: Exactly. My name has been on the lips of many high-powered executives. I've even heard that either Dan Rather or Greg Gumbel suggested me. Not that I would lower myself to the

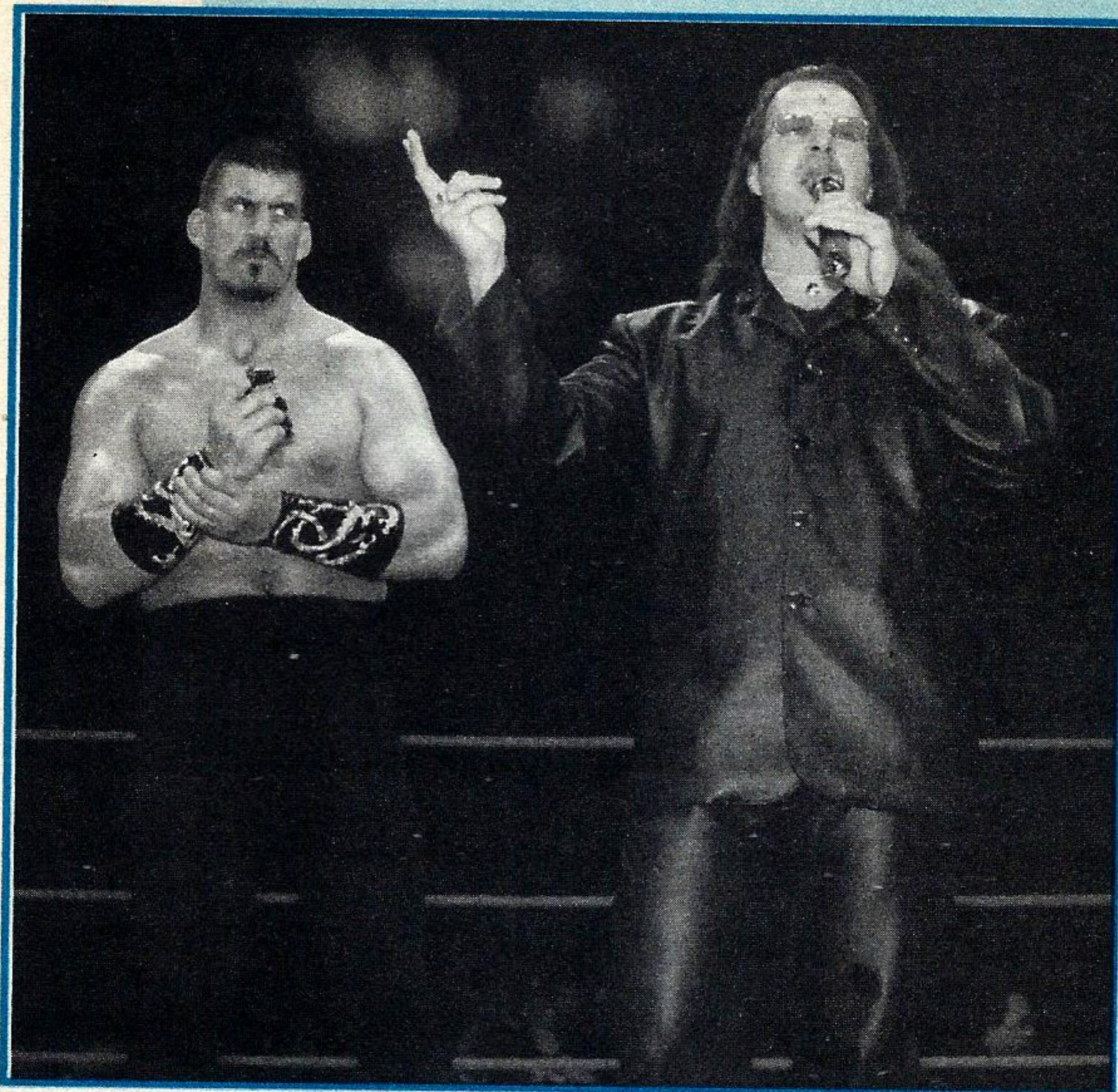


evening news or network sports. It's hard to keep real talent a secret.

Q: If you're regarded as such a talent, especially behind the microphone, why is Joel Gertner still the color commentator on TNN?

A: By the grace of yours truly.

Some people have this wrong-headed notion that I'm trying to remove Joel from *ECW On TNN*. That couldn't be further from the truth. I am doing everything I can to keep Joel on the show. I have to admit, though, he's not helping me very much.

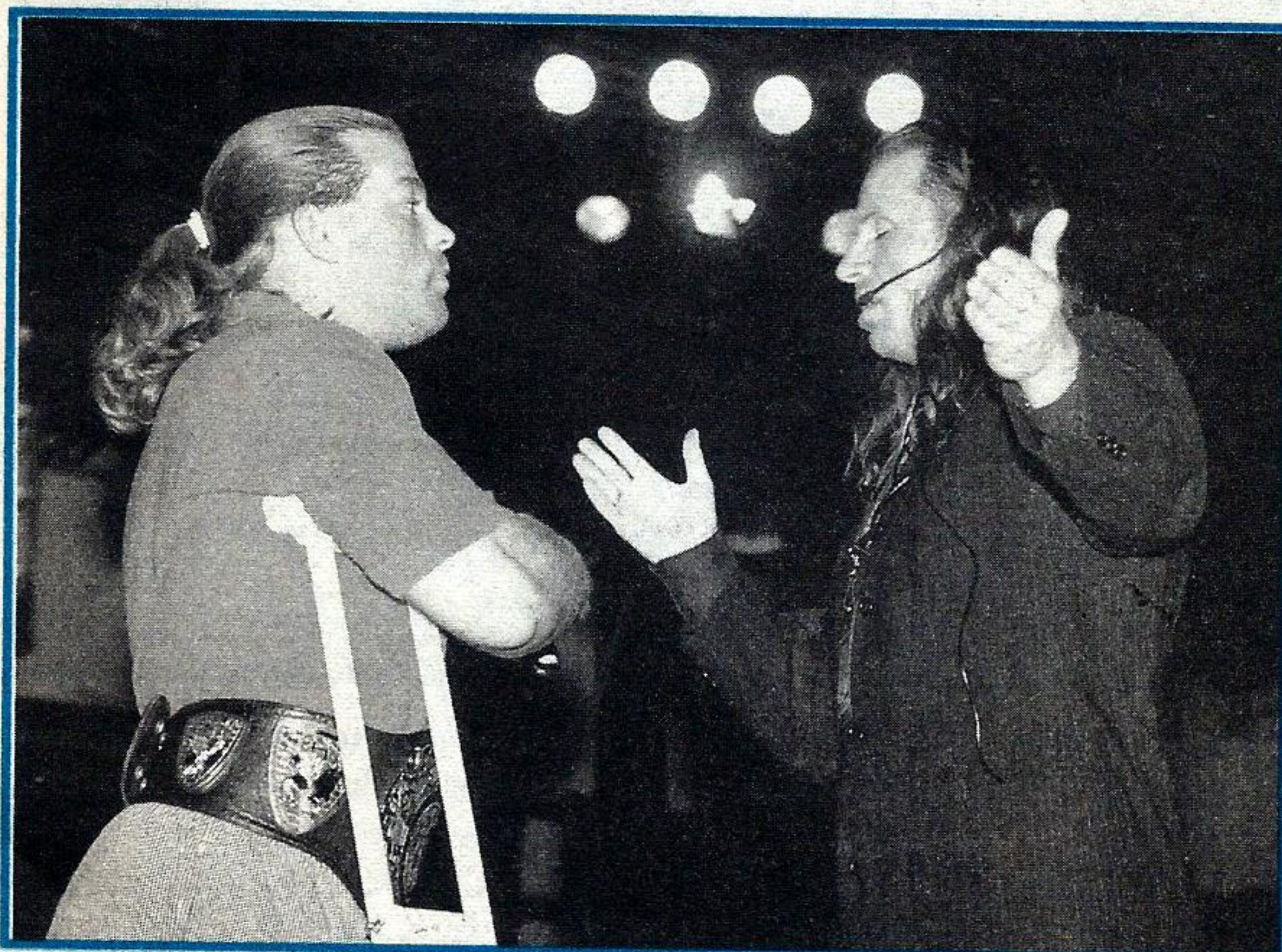


As the long-winded Jackyl in the WWF, Cyrus would often make himself—and not his wrestlers—the focus of storylines. It's amazing that he now claims Joel Gertner is trying to get over at the expense of ECW's wrestlers.

Q: Why does Gertner, along with a lot of others in ECW, think you're trying to sabotage his career?

A: I'm sorry you fell for the same propaganda, Burkett. I read your

"Blindsided" column and learned how Joel called you with some sob story about me trying to get him fired from TNN. You really believed all those inaccuracies?



After clashing with Paul Heyman, Cyrus forced Rob Van Dam to give up his TV title. Cyrus claims that he made Van Dam drop the title because ratings for *Rollerjam* and other TNN shows would suffer while it went undefended.

Q: You're saying you aren't trying to get Gertner fired?

A: I'm giving him tips on how to keep his job. Take his opening introductions. That dirty middle name shtick is so yesterday. My gosh, the fans are snoozing in their seats before he's through. Another thing is the neck brace. Hasn't he milked that for all it's worth? A neck brace gimmick? Come on! That doesn't translate into ratings.

Q: Do you have any advice for Gertner?

A: He needs to absolutely, positively lose about 100 pounds. He must stop making those stupid pouty faces at the camera. Most important of all, he must stop trying to get himself over at the expense of the talent. Joel hasn't spent weeks on the road or been thrown around that ring. While I was hitting the mat and training to be a wrestler, Joel was still watching Saturday morning cartoons and stuffing Twinkies in his face. He wants to be the star of ECW's show without earning his spot. That doesn't make him very popular with the boys ... or the office.

Q: Wait a minute, Cyrus. When you were The Jackyl in the WWF, you tried to get yourself over at the expense of your wrestlers, namely The Truth Commission. How can you point fingers at Joel?

A: You know, those comments really hurt. I never thought I'd have to hear the name Truth Commission ever again. I tried to turn those bozos into main-eventers, and it just didn't work. Now I'm trying to lift ECW up to a major league level. I want to make it a program that TNN is proud to have on its schedule. I want to get Paul E. and the rest of ECW out of that bingo hall mentality and start thinking about ratings, market share, and merchandising. I have a vision for this company, and all ECW and the press want to do is denigrate me personally. That's fine.



Many people think Cyrus' only motivation in attacking ECW is to steal Gertner's position as color commentator on *ECW On TNN*. Needless to say, Gertner isn't going to give up his job without a fight.

I'm going to bring this company out of the gutter despite all of you. *ECW On TNN* will rival *Rollerjam* before I'm through.

Q: I'm glad you mentioned *Rollerjam*. You began one *ECW On TNN* show by plugging *Rollerjam*, which was to air a full hour later. It's well known that ECW was brought to TNN in order to boost the ratings of *Rollerjam*, *Motor Madness*, and the rest of the Friday night lineup. Why are you needed to boost the ECW show? It's *Rollerjam* that needs help. Why aren't you working on that program?

A: The ECW show is doing moderately well because I'm already on it. If I left ECW for *Rollerjam*, ECW's ratings would immediately plummet ... especially in Canada.

Q: How do you answer the charge that this whole TNN thing is a vehicle for your own glory? Just because you flash a TNN badge, you suddenly matter. Is that the only way you can make a name for yourself in ECW?

A: Don't forget, Burkett, that though I may not wrestle often, I can still kick your [butt].

Q: I didn't mean for that question ...

A: Let me finish. TNN needs someone looking out for its interests. TNN needs someone who can take that mish-mash of talent in ECW and mold it into a watchable product. Quality wrestling is fine, but that doesn't necessarily produce ratings. These ECW guys need some fresh gimmicks, some cool graphics, and maybe some hip-hop entrance themes. My suggestion is to trade hardcore for Hollywood. I would get some photo opportunities for Super Crazy, Rob Van Dam, and the other top names. Have them schmooze with the right celebrities. Limp Bizkit would be a thing of the past.

Q: That's an ambitious agenda. What about Paul Heyman? Do you think you're his boss? What's the deal with you ordering him to bring you coffee?

A: I was just testing Paul when I asked for the ECW TV belt *and* a cup of coffee. As everyone saw, he failed. He did bring the TV belt, though. Paul E. will be on "Team TNN" before it's over.

Q: Heyman is the executive producer

of the TNN show. Doesn't he have more authority than you?

A: My superiors want me to make sure Paul E. doesn't screw this up. Paul E. is always concentrating on the wrestlers and what kind of matches they'll have. He's always thinking about what the fans want. That's a prescription for disaster.

Q: What? Anticipating what the fans want has led to ECW's current success. Shouldn't Heyman want to continue satisfying the fans?

A: Who cares about wrestling fans? TNN wants a mainstream audience. We want the teenager who's tired of playing video games, the mom who just picked up her kid from soccer practice, and the channel surfer looking to fill time before *Rollerjam* comes on. We can't attract a broad-range demographic with the way Paul E. runs the show.

Q: How would you modify the TNN show to attract a more mainstream audience?

A: Besides trying to get Gertner to improve his performance, I would try to get Joey Styles to say "Oh my God!" a few less times. I would have the ring crew safely store all chairs and tables backstage. No more White Zombie videos. Who wants to see those guys on TNN? I'd rather watch ECW highlights to the tune of Garth Brooks or, if we're feeling rowdy, maybe Hank Williams Jr.'s *Monday Night Football* theme. Catfights would be banned. I don't remember Daisy Duke squirming on the floor with anyone. Above all, I'd appear on the show more often. Charisma equals ratings points.

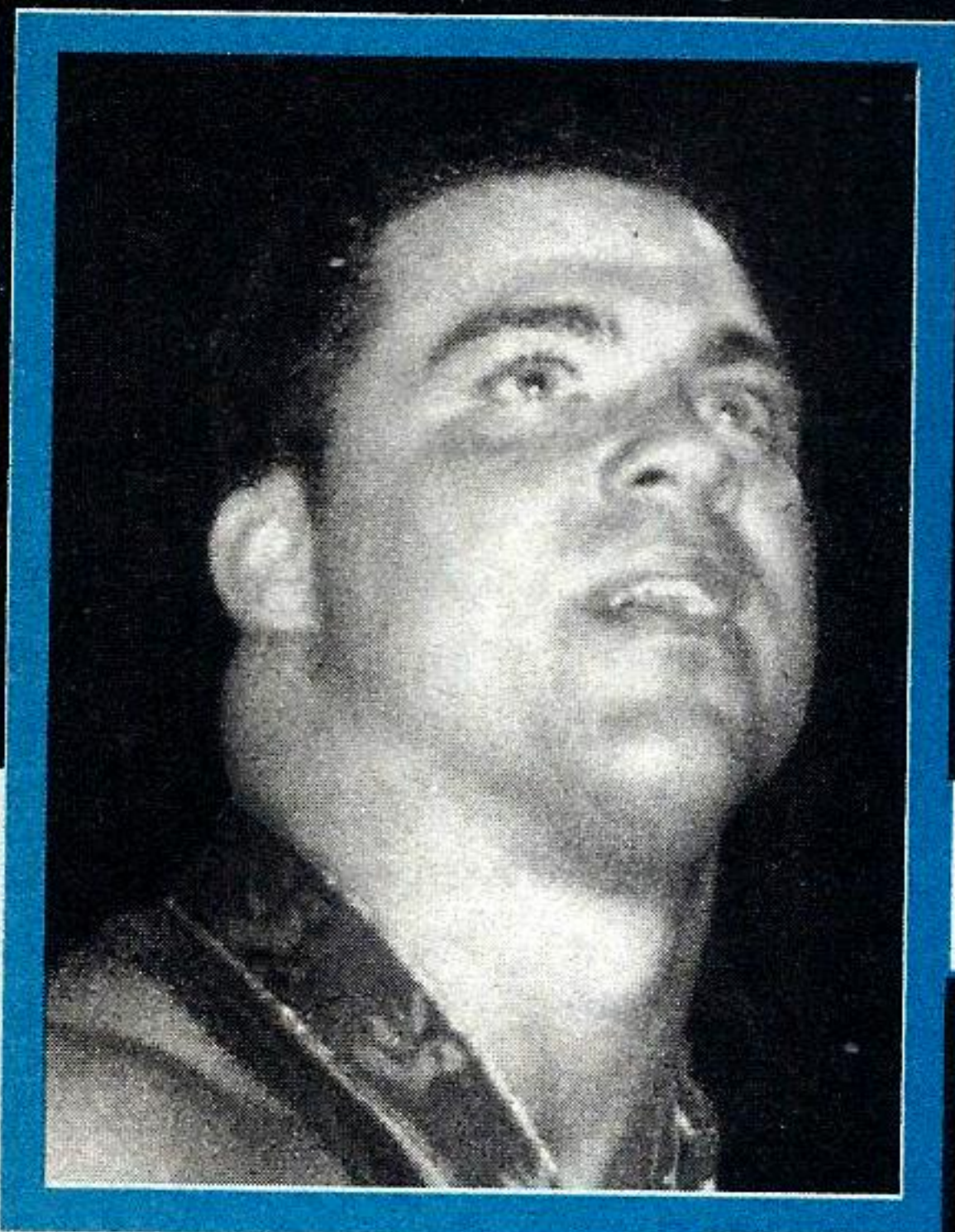
Q: You certainly have ideas. But aren't you overlooking what brought ECW to the dance?

A: Sometimes you have to change the dance tunes just to stay in step, my friend. With Cyrus leading the partnership between TNN and ECW, you can expect big changes in the future. □

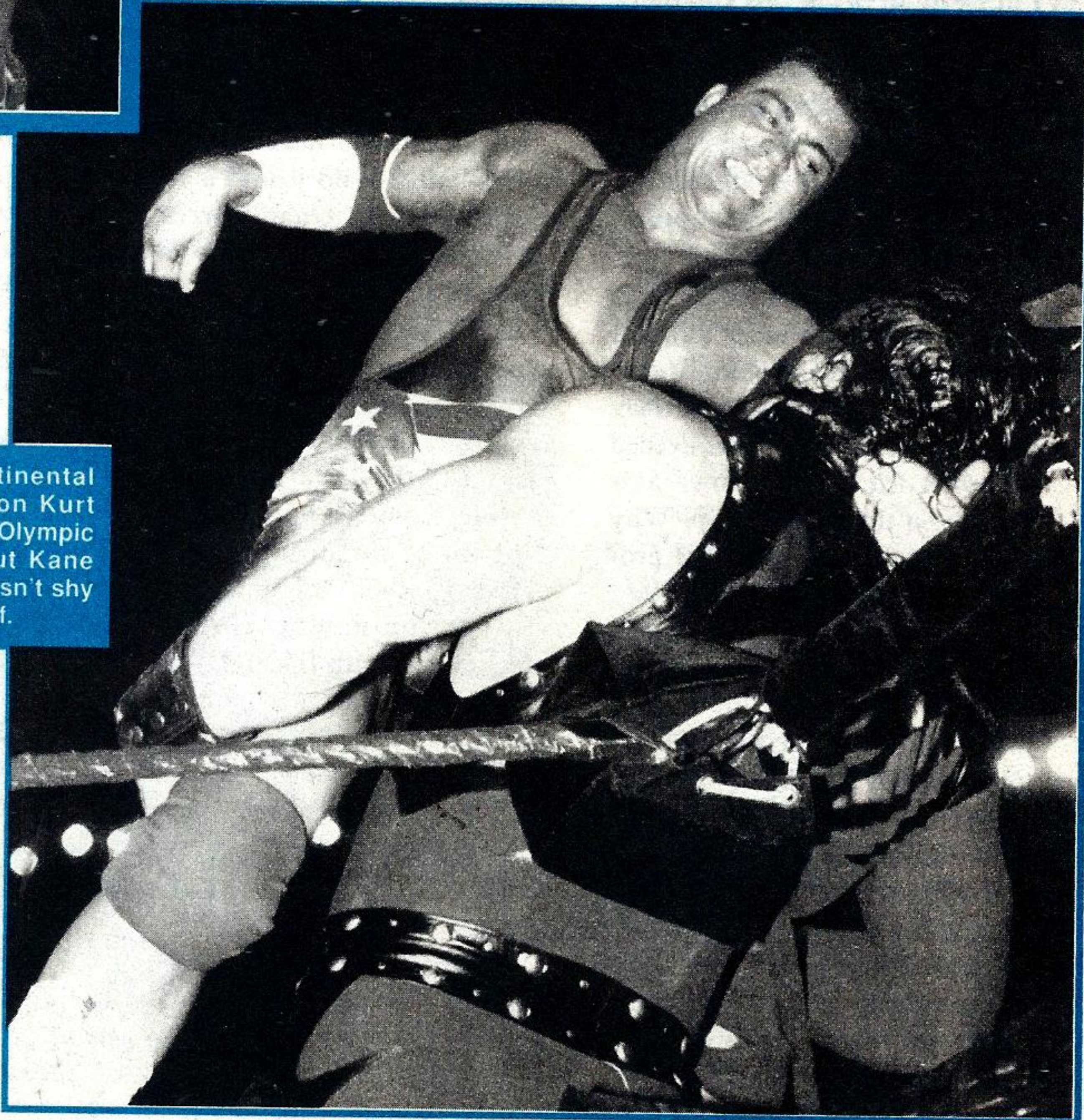
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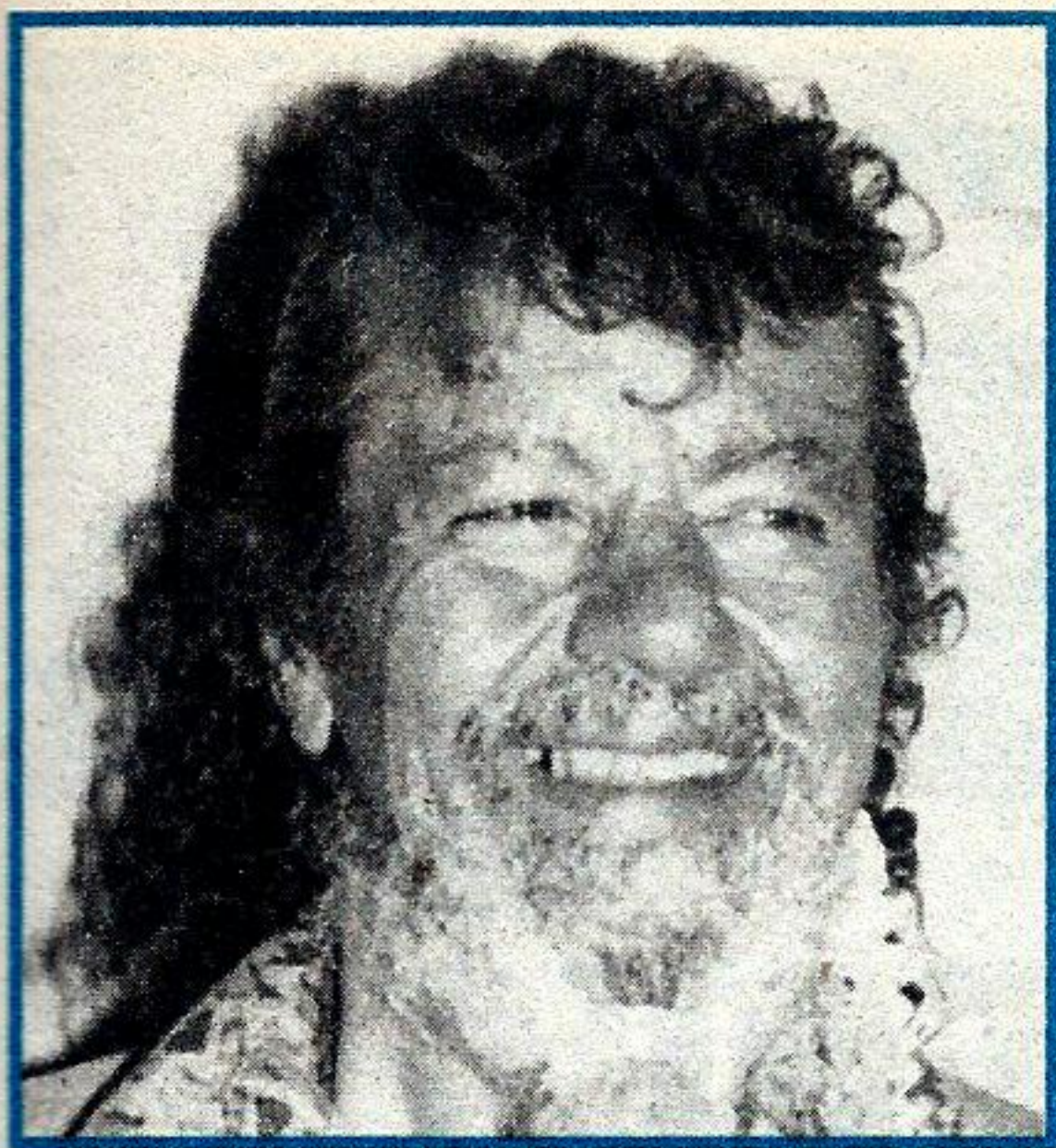
THE WRESTLER PANEL EXAMINES

KURT ANGLE



Former WWF Intercontinental and European champion Kurt Angle relies a lot on his Olympic training in the ring, but Kane found out that Angle doesn't shy away from the rough stuff.

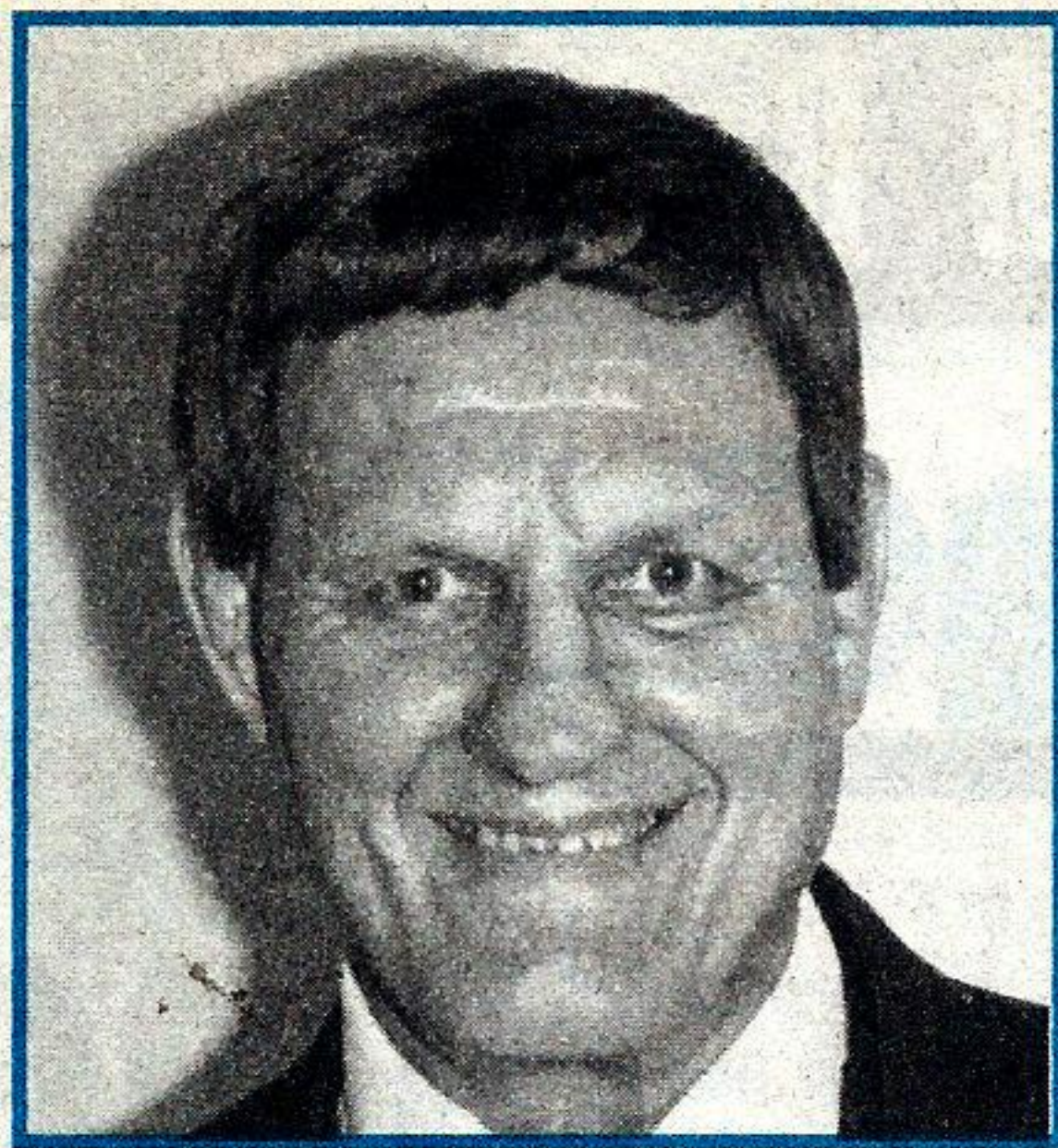




CAPT. LOU ALBANO

"This Angle is a real strange kid. He's obviously got a ton of natural ability. Anybody can see that. But he likes himself way too much. There's nothing wrong with having confidence, daddy, but sometimes you can take it too far, like Angle does. As a former Olympian, this kid should be an American hero in the WWF, but everybody hates him because he doesn't have any humility. Once Kurt Angle decides to open his eyes and shut his mouth, he'll become a world champ."

Capt. Lou Albano, "The Guiding Light," has managed 13 different tag teams to a record 17 WWF World tag team titles.



KILLER KOWALSKI

"After Boston, no town puts out better wrestlers than Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. After wrestling with Bruno Sammartino and Dominic DeNucci for all those years, I ought to know. I think Kurt Angle is cut from the same cloth. He's a tough wrestler who comes to fight every night and is tough as nails on the mat. Sure, he talks too much, but underneath that lip, he's a fine wrestler. Besides, he isn't afraid to bend the rules. That's always a plus."

Killer Kowalski, one of the most sadistic rule-breakers in the history of the sport, runs a wrestling school in Malden, Massachusetts.



MASSA SAITO

"Kurt Angle has a gift that only a few wrestlers possess, and that gift is the ability to get under his opponents' skin. There is something loathsome about this man that only his opponents can understand. I can sense it because I, too, had this ability when I wrestled. Angle can ruin his opponent's strategy with a smirk and have him on the brink of defeat before they even lock up. That, not his Olympic experience, is the biggest key to his success right now."

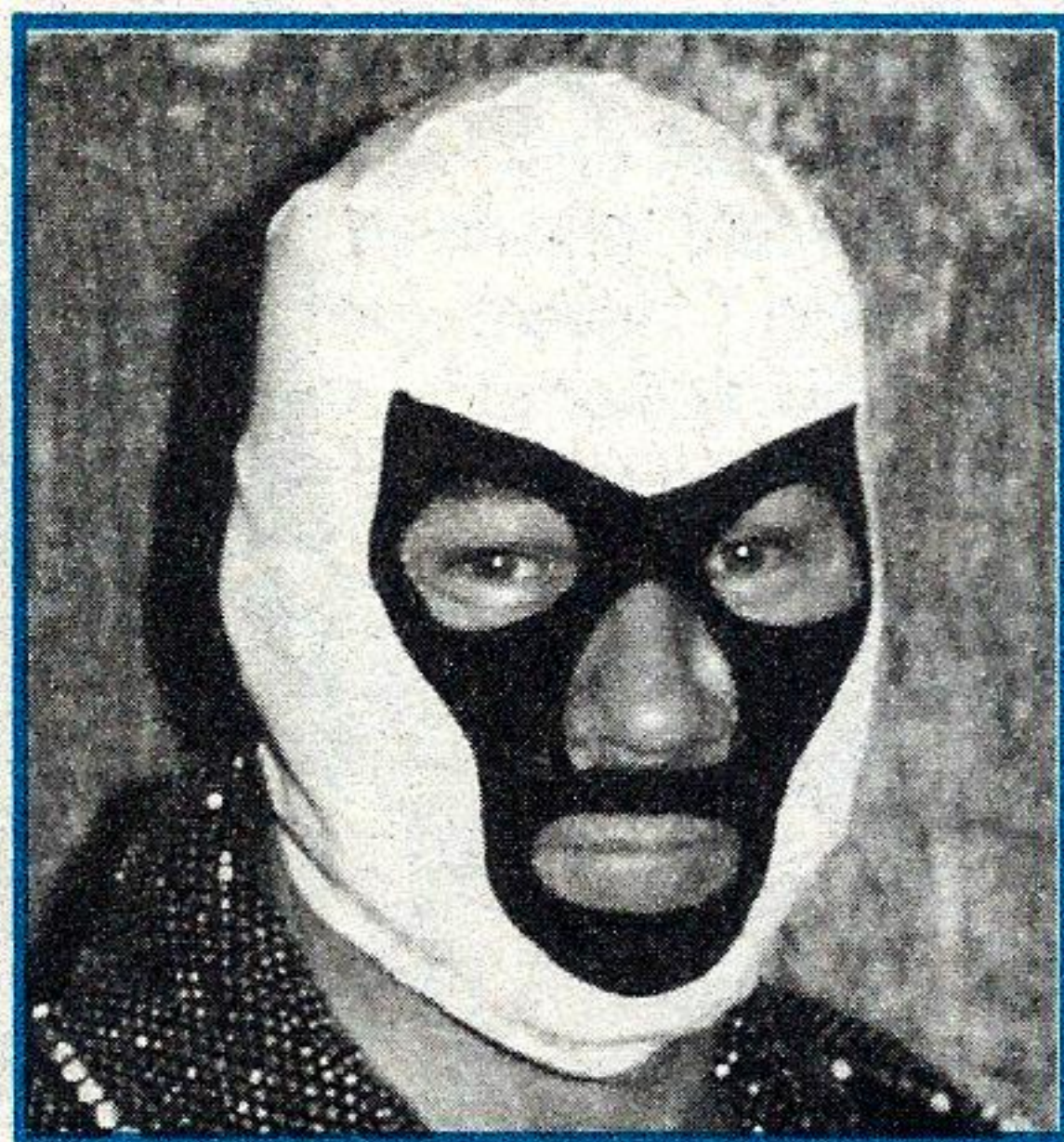
Massa Saito, a former AWA World heavyweight and WWF tag team champion, retired last year after a 24-year career.



FABULOUS MOOLAH

"I may be partial, but I think Kurt Angle gets a bad rap, hon. This kid did a fine job as Intercontinental champion and European champion—not to mention he's a real American hero. I don't know what's wrong with the crowds over here in America, but they sure love him over in Europe. I can tell you that much. I wish the wrestling fans here in America would get patriotic once in a while and get behind Kurt Angle. He's somebody this country can be proud of."

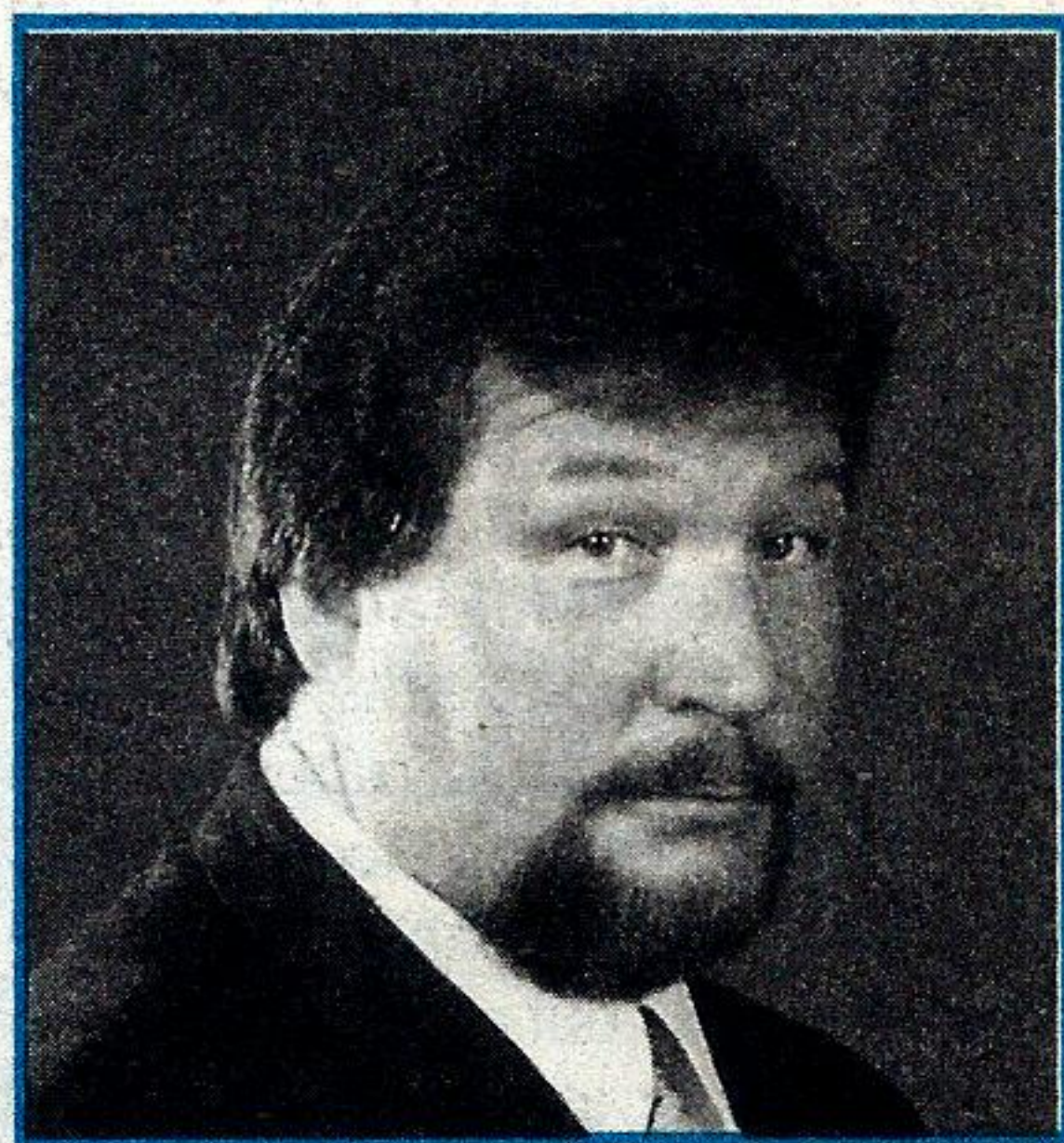
Fabulous Moolah, the finest woman wrestler in history, held the World title for 28 years. She is now a trainer and a part-time competitor.



MR. WRESTLING II

"When I see a kid of Kurt Angle's ability climb through the ropes, I just have to smile, whether he's a rulebreaker or not. It makes me happy that someone still pays attention to science and technique and doesn't always reach for the first chair or table when the going gets rough. No disrespect to Rey Misterio Jr. or Rob Van Dam or any of those other high-flyers, but give me Kurt Angle vs. Tazz on the mat. I could watch them go at it seven days a week and twice on Sunday!"

Mr. Wrestling II, one of wrestling's most popular and accomplished stars, held many regional tag team and singles titles throughout the South.



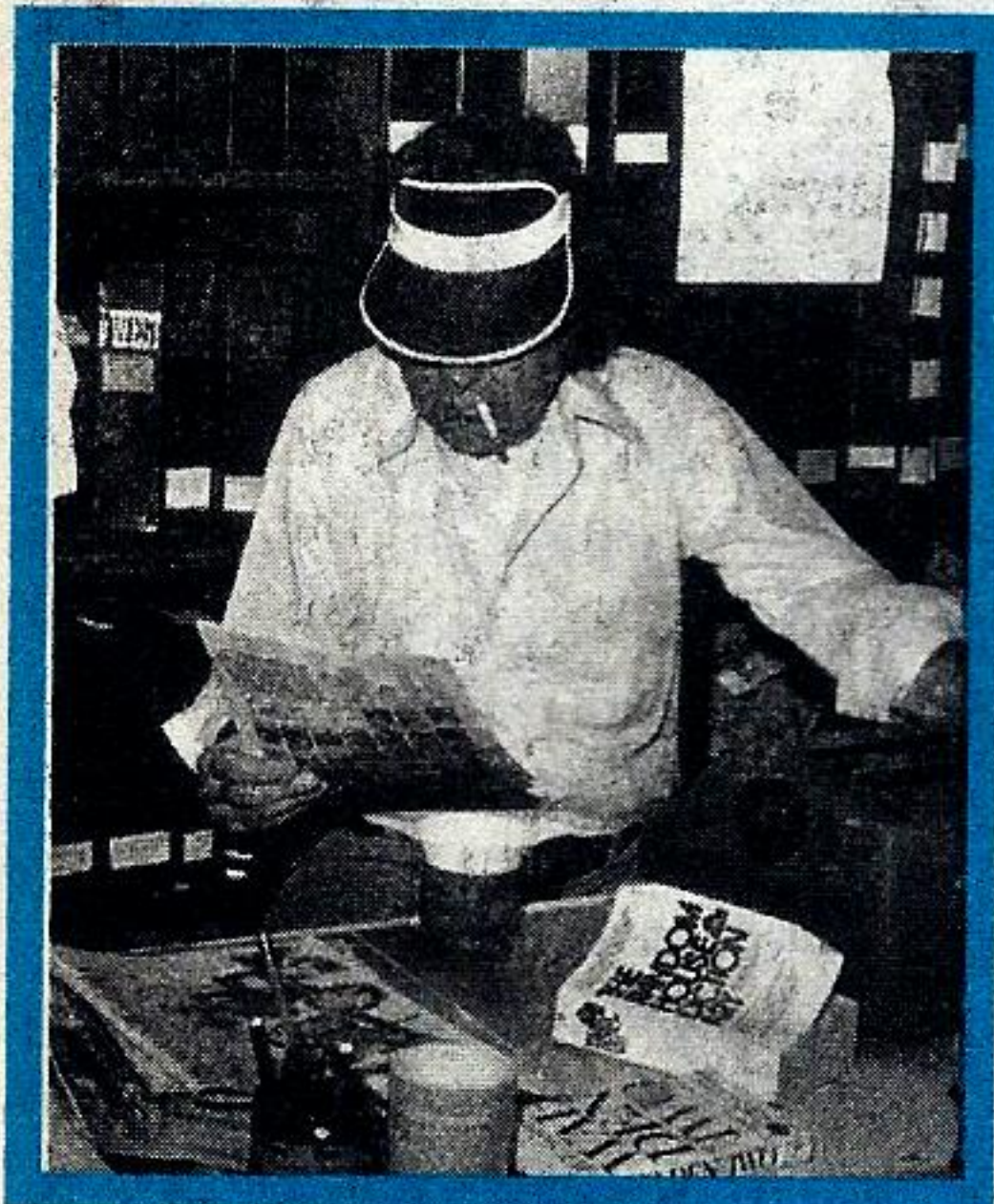
TED DiBIASE

"Kurt Angle is an exceptional talent, but one thing concerns me: He is easily upset by the fans and by his opponents. It's really not all that difficult to get inside his head. Tazz and Chris Jericho have already proven how easy it is to get Angle flustered. The man has enough pure ability to overcome his temper, but Angle would be a much more effective wrestler if he focused harder on his matches. It's something that should come to him in time, though."

Ted DiBiase, a three-time WWF World tag team champion and one of the sport's most accomplished managers, is now retired from the sport.

MATT BROCK

Remembers



GORGEIOUS GEORGE

THIS SEEMS LIKE as good a time as any to talk about Gorgeous George. Long before names like Hulk Hogan and The Rock were rolling off the lips of housewives and working men everywhere, there was Gorgeous George, the man most responsible for wrestling's first boom back in the 1950s. All this talk you're hearing from Vince McMahon about wrestling as sports entertainment? Well, take it from a reporter who was there: Gorgeous George probably came up with that idea before McMahon was out of diapers.

If you want to know the truth, if the WWF ever finds a way to get back on one of the big networks (I'm not counting UPN) in prime time—NBC seems like the most viable possibility—it won't be the first time that pro wrestling has been on the networks regularly. You'll have to go all the way back to the 1950s to find the last time, and that's when Gorgeous George ruled wrestling.

Maybe the most amazing thing about George was that he was a colorful character long before there was such a thing as color TV. He



Gorgeous George's colorful style was way before its time. The golden hair, flowing sequined robes, and flashy showmanship distracted his more ordinary opponents.

had been around the sport for almost 10 years without making much of a splash before he decided

to grow his hair long and dye it blond. That's the Freebirds look, for those of you not old enough to



One of Gorgeous George's most annoying prematch rituals was having one of his ring butlers spray the mat with disinfectant before he wrestled. George's opponents weren't always as patient as this guy here was.

remember Gorgeous George. He wore long sequined robes, just like Ric Flair would one day wear, and put gold bobby pins in his hair. When George entered the ring, one of his ring butlers—that's what he called them—would spray the ring with disinfectant while "Pomp And Circumstance"—that would one day become Randy Savage's music—played in the background.

So now maybe you can see how just about every popular wrestler and gimmick over the past 20 years got its start with Gorgeous George. George, however, was no fan favorite. He was one of the most heinous rulebreakers I've seen in all my years of covering the squared circle, and there was that one time when he caused a riot. A bunch of fans were injured and one was even stabbed.

Most of the time, though, his effect on wrestling was positive. When attendance or TV ratings went down, Gorgeous George was brought in to save the day. He always attracted a crowd.

Probably his most famous match came on July 27, 1950. George had the old version of the AWA World heavyweight title, and Lou Thesz was the NWA World champion. The two of them met in Chicago to unify the belts, and I don't remember there being an empty seat in the house.

Two things I remember vividly about that night. One was Thesz

George's appearance, that was his problem, but that he'd pay for his mistake in the end. The old saying about never judging a book by its cover was never truer of anything than it was of George.

The other thing I remember was after the match, when Thesz had beaten Gorgeous George for the belts. This time, Thesz walked up to me in the locker room and said, "Matt, that was the best advice anyone's ever given me. That Gorgeous George is one tough customer. It's just too bad he dresses that way."

Funny thing, though. I never had many chances to speak with Gorgeous George one-on-one. He tend-

walking up to me near the locker rooms before the card and saying, "This George character, is he for real?" I told him that if he wanted to be deceived by

ed to be a private man who saved his interviews for the TV camera and rarely spoke to the press. I'd say I probably didn't talk to him face-to-face more than 10 times in 20 years. Like I said, though, he played a major part in wrestling history. For example, he lost to Bruno Sammartino in one of Sammartino's first matches in the United States. In 1962, he dropped a hair vs. mask match against The Destroyer at the Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles, and I'll be damned if seeing George bald wasn't the strangest thing I've ever seen in my life.

He died a year later—December 26, 1963—of a heart attack after collapsing in his apartment in Hollywood, California. Pretty appropriate, if you ask me, that he died of a heart attack, but not too appropriate that he died alone. He was only 48, and you'd better believe that if he were alive today, he'd be awfully amused by what's going on in wrestling.

He'd probably say something like, "What took them so long to catch up?" □



The Destroyer exults as George awaits his haircut after losing this infamous hair vs. mask match in 1962. George died of a heart attack in Hollywood, California, just 13 months later.

Spot Light N...

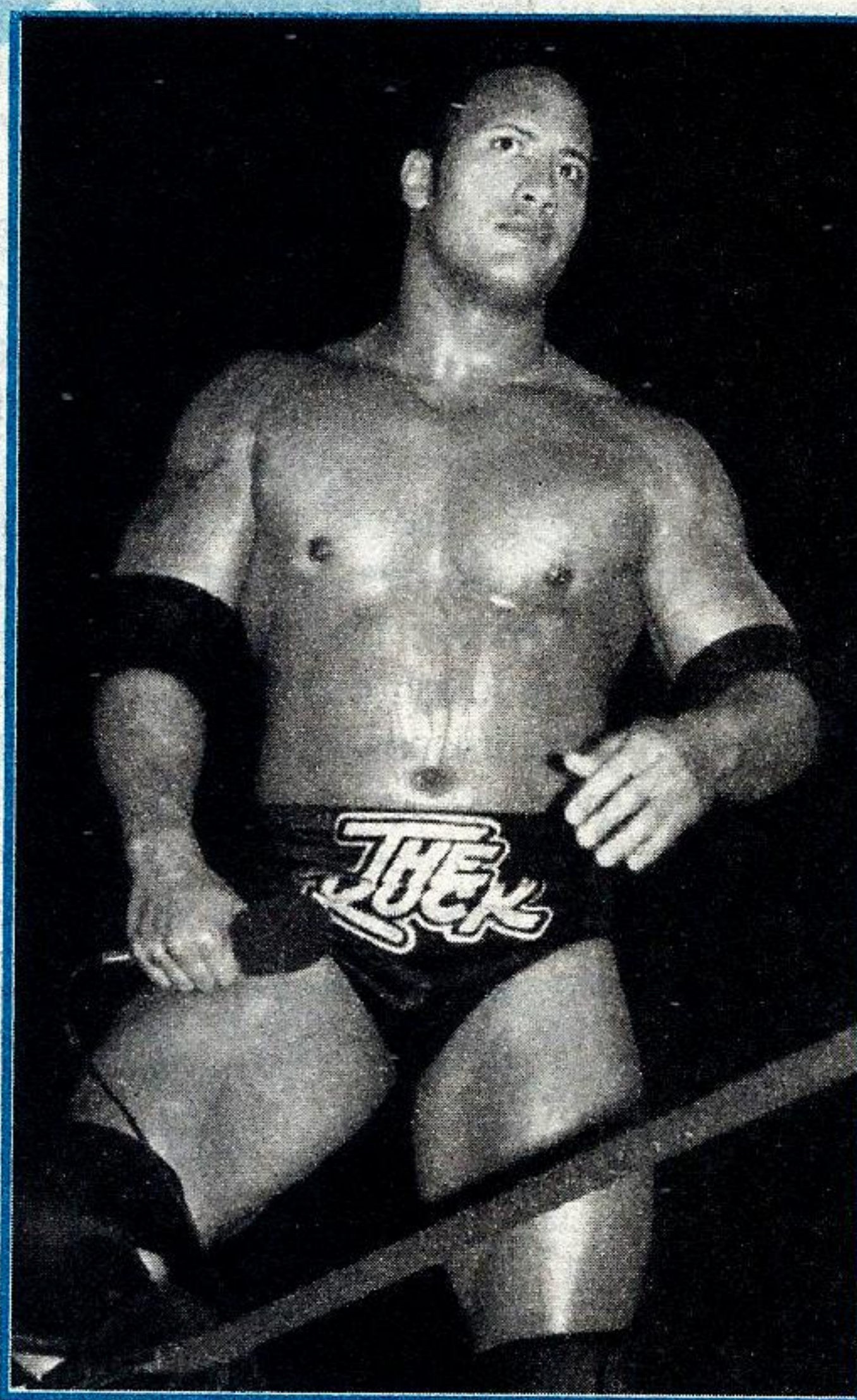
THE ROCK

IS THERE ANYONE in the sport as popular than The Rock right now? A better question would be this: Is there any wrestler out there who is anywhere *near* as popular as The Rock? Well, maybe a few could come relatively close, but there's no question he's the hottest star in the industry—and he's only 27!

A native of Miami, The Rock was born into a wrestling family. The son of former wrestler Rocky Johnson and grandson of former wrestler Peter Maivia, The Rock's natural athletic ability allowed him to become a standout football star in high school and at the University of Miami. After a year with the Calgary Stampede of the Canadian Football League, however, The Rock decided to return to his roots: professional wrestling.

As Flex Kavana, he made his pro debut in May 1996 in the USWA, but he didn't stay in the minors for long. In late-'96, he joined the WWF as Rocky Maivia, a talented fan favorite (he won the Intercontinental title from Hunter Hearst Helmsley in February '97) whom most of the fans didn't really favor.

After losing the I-C title to Owen Hart and taking three months off to nurse a knee injury, The Rock, tired of being booed, joined the militant Nation of Domination. It wouldn't take him long to challenge Faarooq



for leadership of the group. After recapturing the I-C title and driving Faarooq out of the Nation, The Rock actually started to hear scant cheers. No one, not even The Rock himself, could have realized at the time just how loud the cheers for him would eventually become.

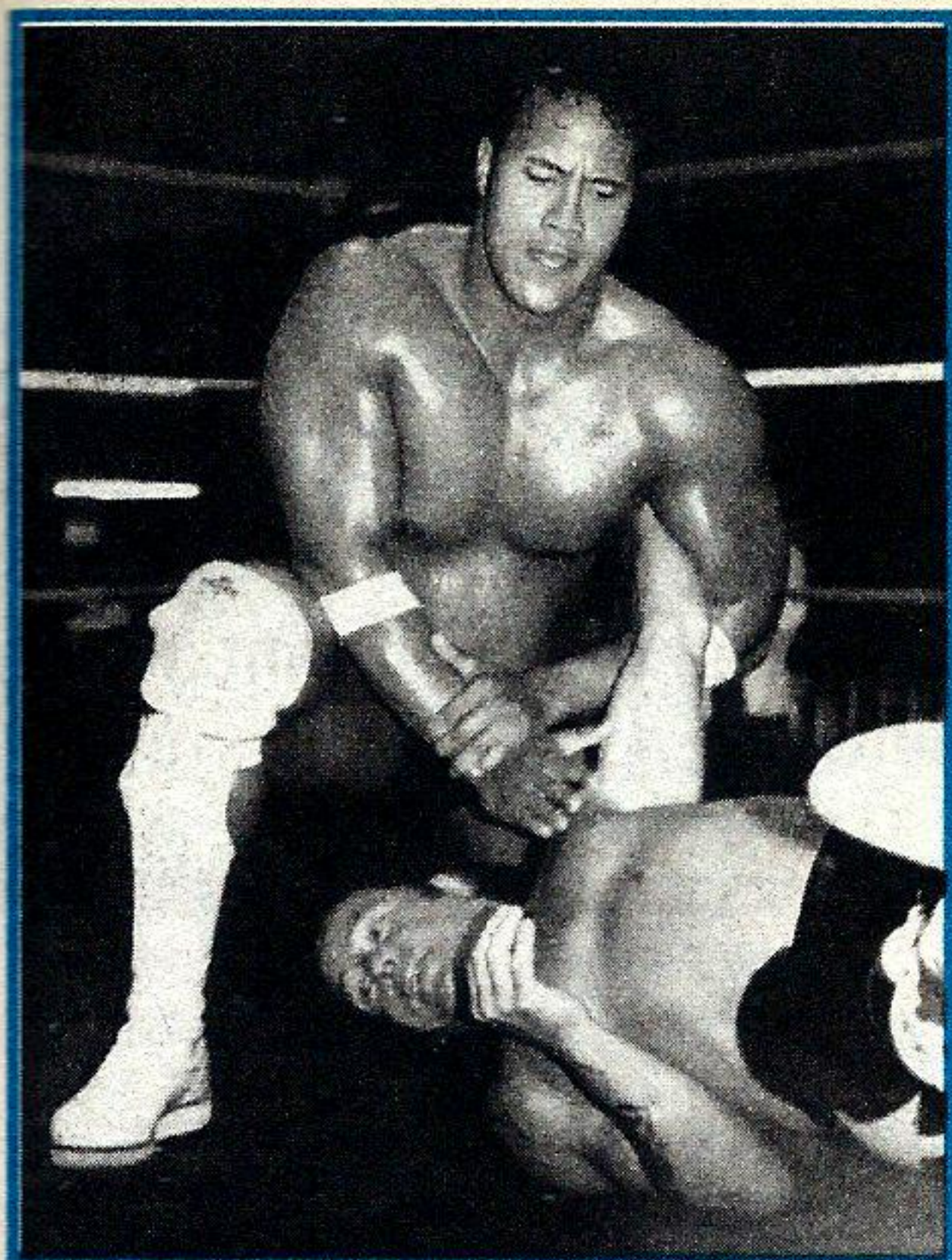
During the summer of '98, The Rock resumed his feud with Triple-H. Their ladder match at SummerSlam that year saw Triple-H defeat The Rock for his first I-C title in nearly

two years. The animosity between the two rivals has never subsided.

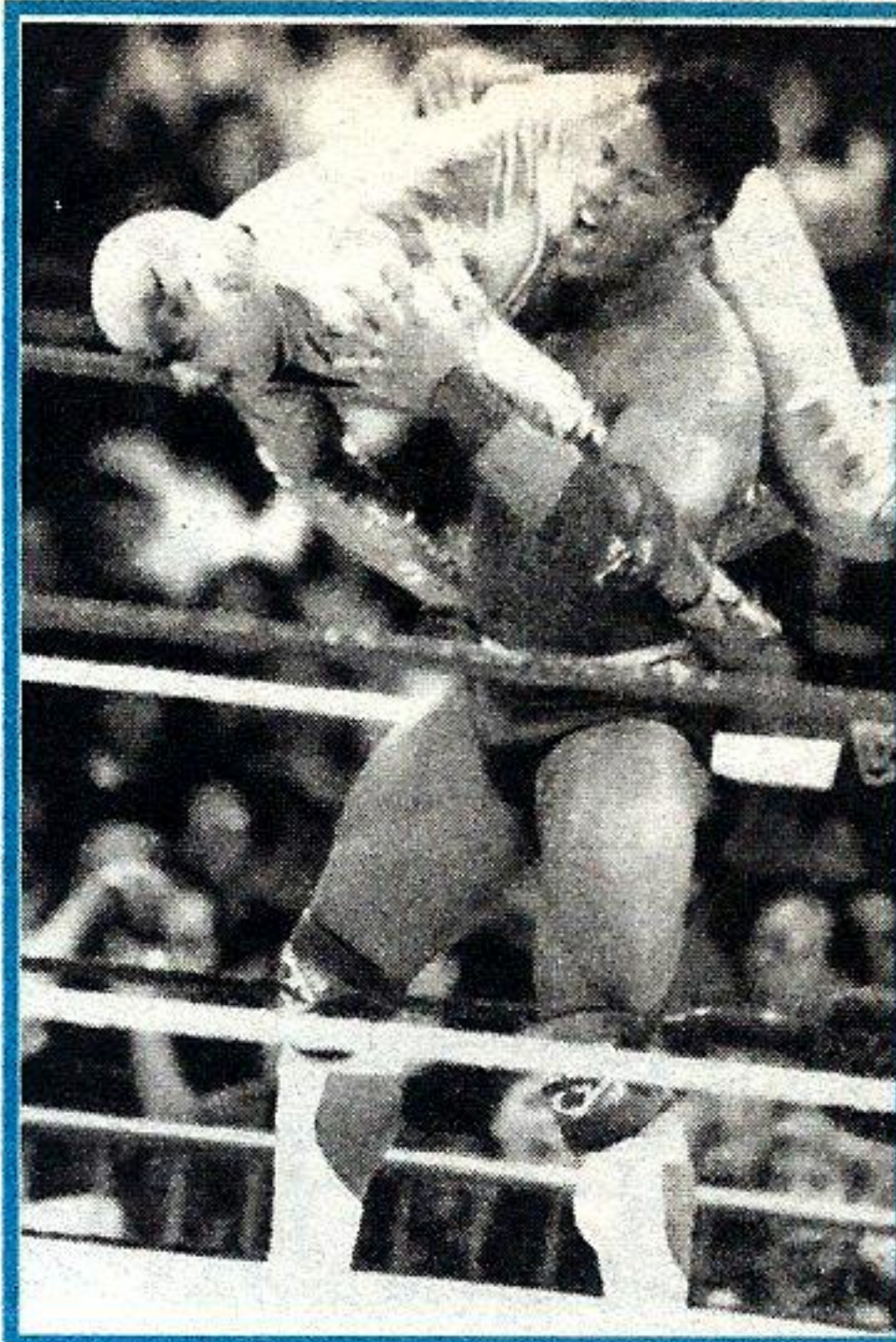
Soon The Rock started thinking about winning the WWF World title and thus turned his attention away from Triple-H and to "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin, a man who had previously beaten him in defense of the I-C belt. With the help of WWF head Vince McMahon, The Rock captured his first WWF World title by defeating Mankind in the finals of a tournament at Survivor Series '98. That was the first of three times he beat Mankind for the WWF title between November 1998 and January 1999. But McMahon couldn't help The Rock successfully defend the belt against Austin at WrestleMania XV, and Austin walked out the champ.

Following WrestleMania, The Rock's career underwent numerous changes. Not only did he eventually start teaming with two former enemies, Austin and Mankind (he nabbed three WWF World tag team titles with Mankind), and resume his feud with Triple-H, he also became one of the most popular stars in WWF history.

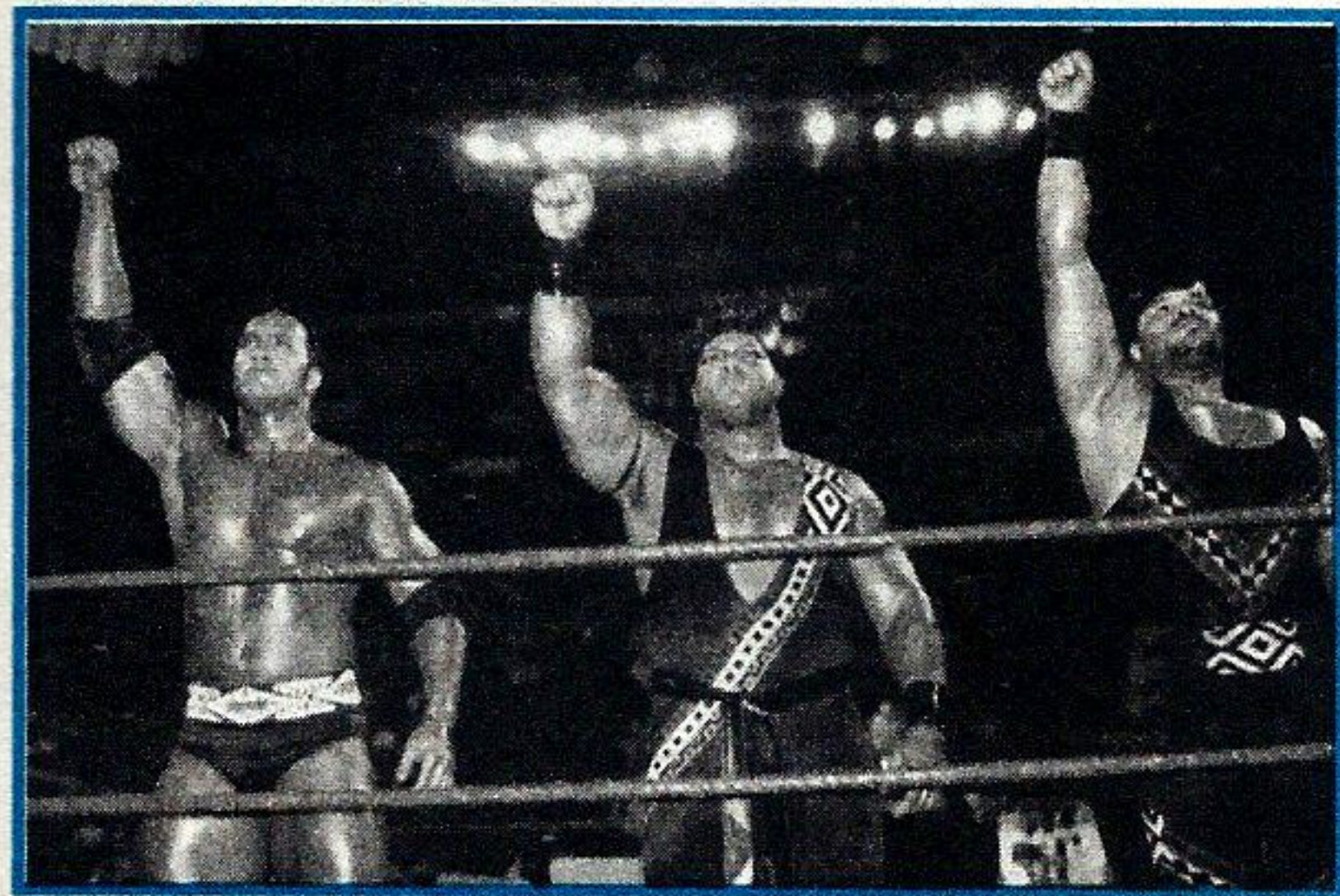
He's so popular that his autobiography, *The Rock Says*, quickly shot up to number one on the *New York Times*' bestseller list this winter, and he was asked to host *Saturday Night Live* in March. The most electrifying man in sports entertainment has earned some time in our "Spotlight."



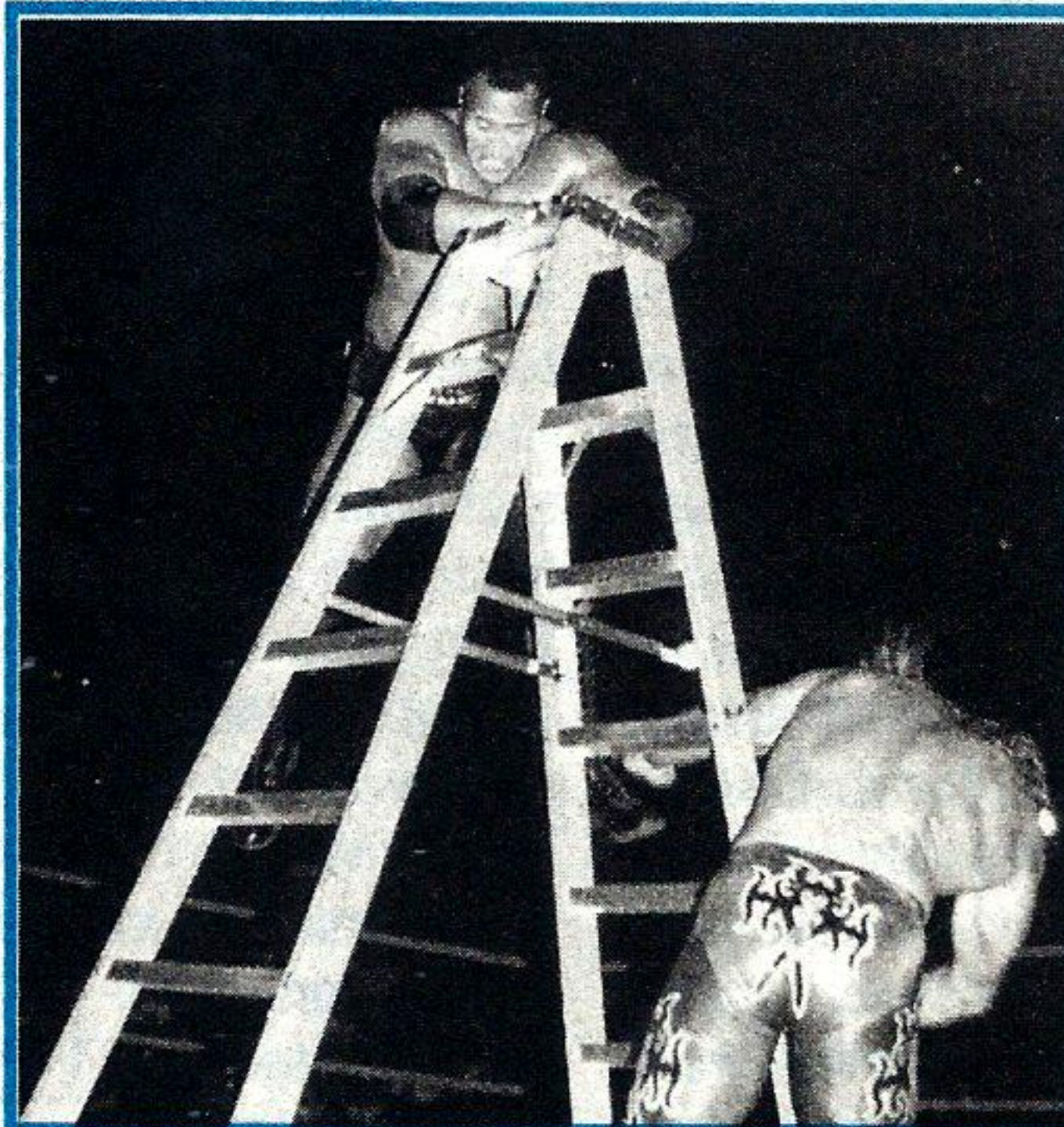
June 1996: As Flex Kavana in the USWA, The Rock learned the nuances of wrestling from veterans like Bill Dundee. Wrestling wasn't exactly like football at first, but The Rock did see similarities.



November 1996: After only seven months of toiling in Memphis, Rocky Maivia made his WWF PPV debut at the Survivor Series. With his good looks and athletic prowess, he had WWF officials and fans talking about him immediately.

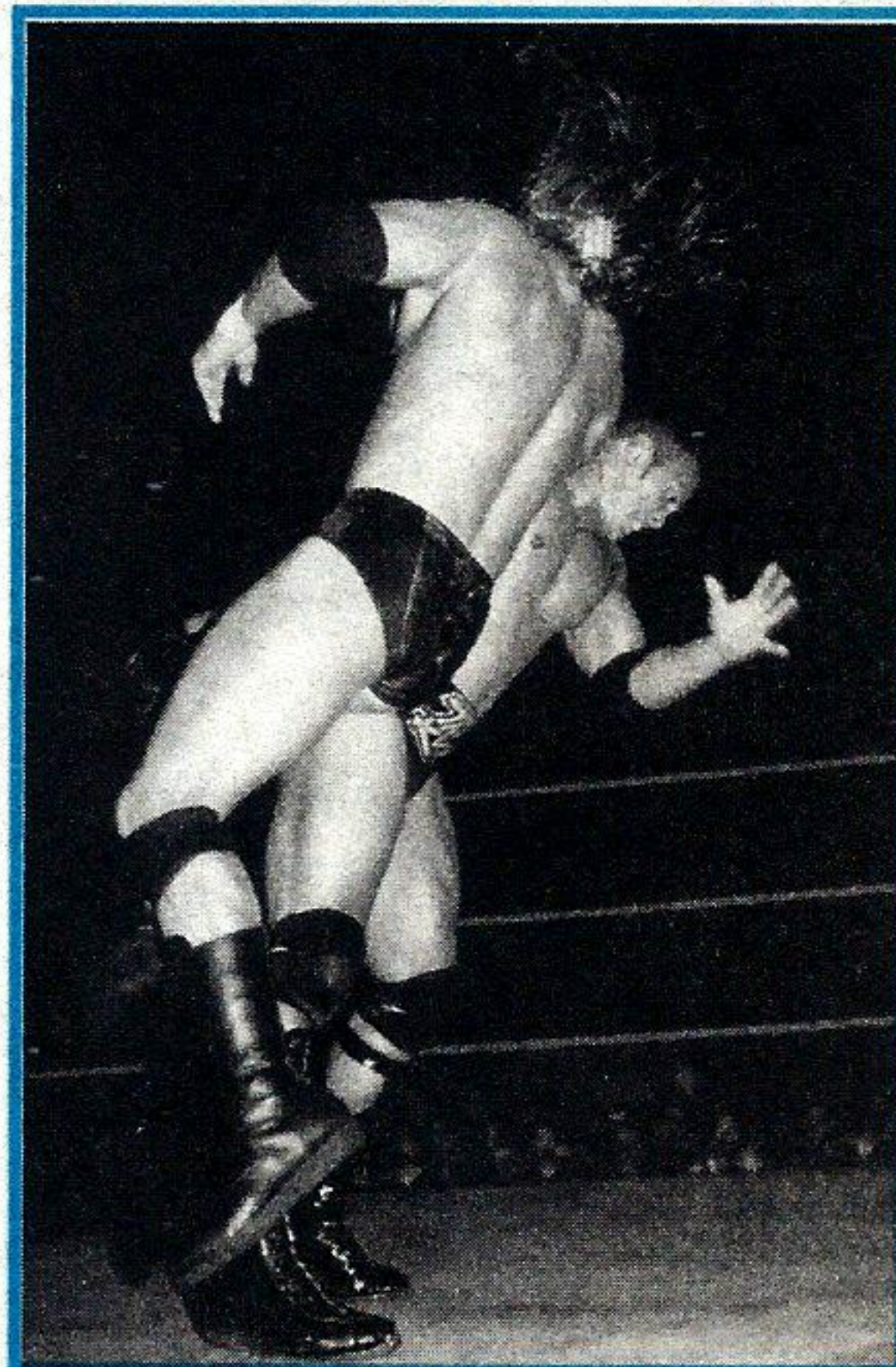
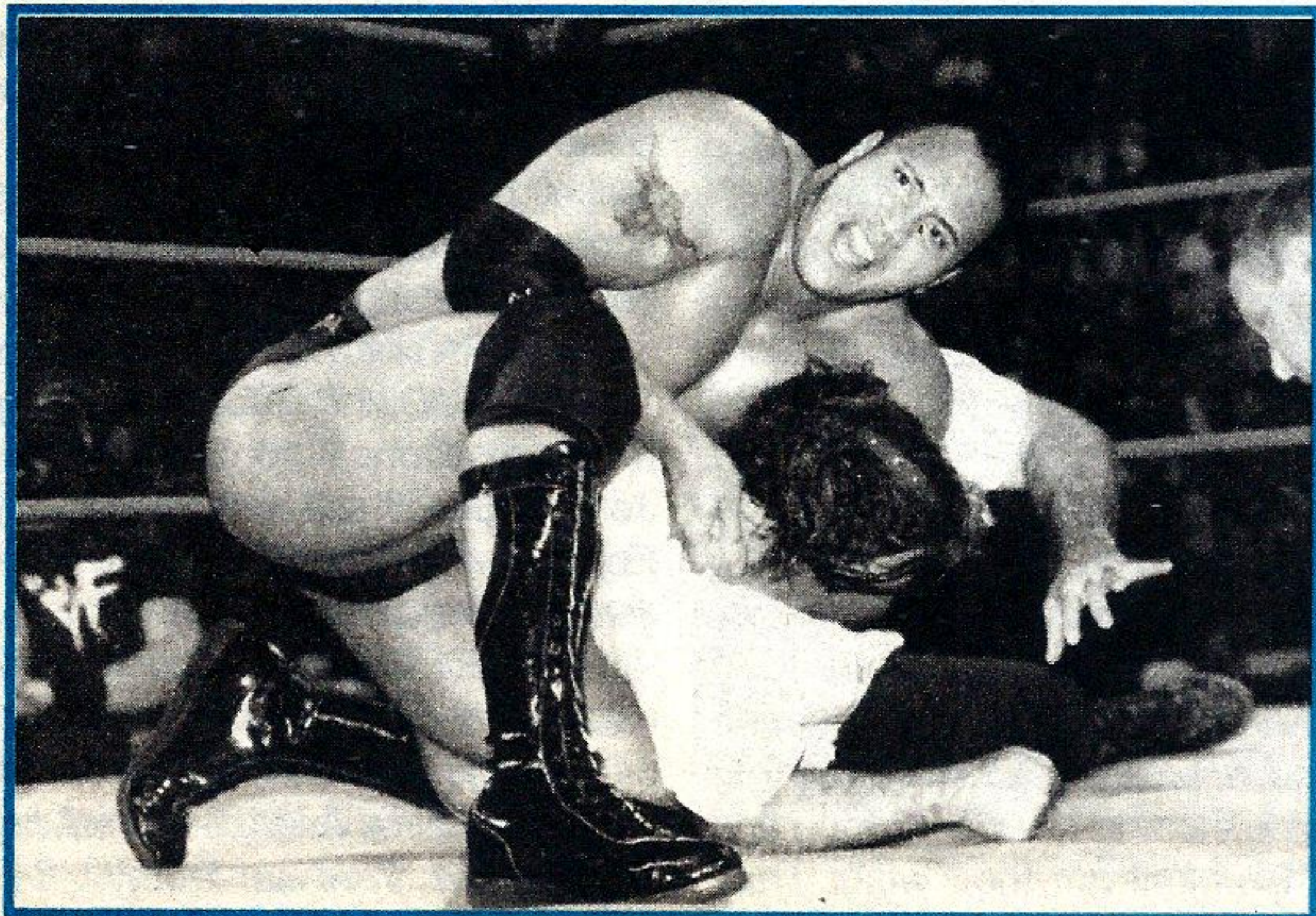


December 1997: As a member of The Nation of Domination, The Rock wasn't willing to let Faarooq (or anyone else) steal the spotlight. His obsession with becoming the group's leader exposed his excessive ego.



August 1998: The Rock and Triple-H fought for the WWF I-C title in a SummerSlam ladder match. The bout, which Triple-H won, was one of many high-profile matches between the two.

November 1998: Mankind was the sentimental choice to win his first WWF World title at Survivor Series, but Vince McMahon and The Rock don't care for sentiment. They collaborated to make Rock the champ.



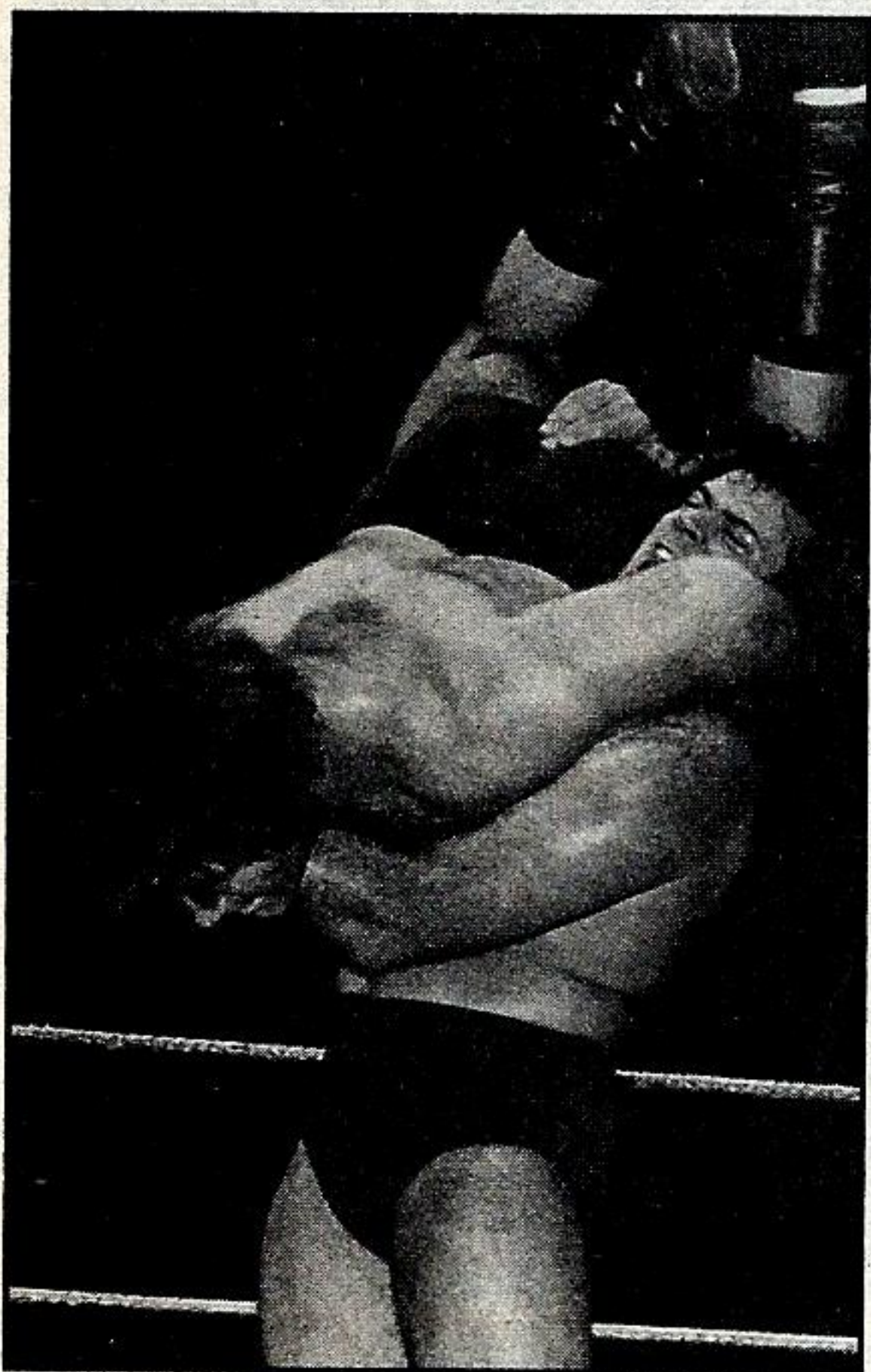
August 1999: Although The Rock was pursuing WWF World champ Triple-H for most of the past year, "The Game" did a good job keeping the World title around his waist. The Rock's time is coming, however.

Scrapbook

Explore with us the rich history of this great sport as we recall the important news stories at five-year intervals dating back a quarter of a century

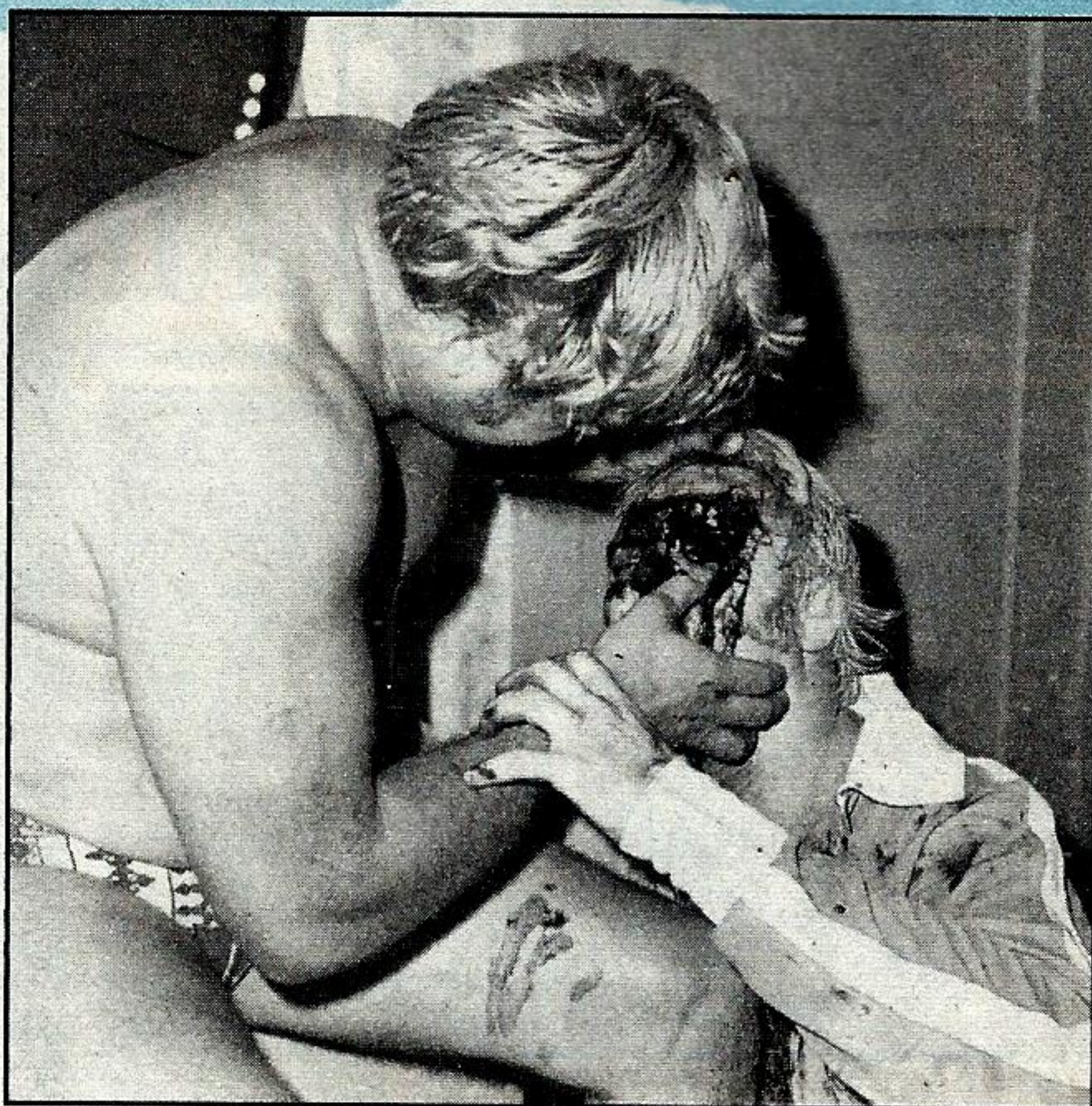
JULY/AUGUST
1975

A CAPACITY CROWD at the West Palm Beach Auditorium saw NWA World champion Jack Brisco and challenger Bob Roop battle to a classic 60-minute draw. The two former NCAA champions gave a display of scientific wrestling never before seen in a professional match in Florida ... In Tampa, Florida, Roop threw away the rulebook to try to take advantage of young Bob Backlund. Before Backlund was seriously injured, however, he received help from Terry Funk ... In Boston, Spiros Arion and Bruno Sammartino were battling outside the ring when Spiros



Although Spiros Arion administered plenty of punishment during this 1975 match against Bruno Sammartino, Arion defeated Sammartino by the slightest of margins—a countout.

beat the 20-count back into the ring, leaving Sammartino at ringside with a countout loss ... Blackjack Mulligan and Blackjack Lanza won the WWF World tag team title from "Irish" Pat Barrett and Dominic DeNucci on August 26 in Philadelphia ... Bobby Heenan nearly bled to death when he tried to interfere in a match on behalf of Ray Stevens. The incident occurred as Stevens battled Pepper Gomez in a steel



Ray Stevens checks on Bobby "The Brain" Heenan, who was carved up so badly that he needed 35 stitches and a blood transfusion after trying to attack Pepper Gomez, Stevens' opponent, with a plastic knife.

cage match. As Gomez began to take the advantage, Heenan climbed into the ring and tried to attack Gomez with a plastic knife. Gomez, though, was prepared for the attack. He grabbed the knife from Heenan and sliced up the manager's face. Bobby was rushed to the hospital, where it took 35 stitches and a transfusion to save his life ... Capt. Lou Albano swapped the contracts of the Valiant brothers for Bobby Heenan's Blackjacks, Lanza and Mulligan. Albano also signed Buggy McGraw ... A tag team match pitting Mil Mascaras and Mighty Igor against Ivan Koloff and Bulldog Brower ended in a double-disqualification with all four wrestlers battling outside the ring ... Greg Gagne and Jim Brunzell got their wish: They were granted a crack at Ray

Stevens and Nick Bockwinkel's AWA World tag team championship—with Bobby Heenan barred from ringside. It seemed as though the popular pair would come away with the belts when Gagne caught Stevens in a sleeperhold. Bockwinkel, however, interfered, and the subsequent disqualification kept the belts from changing hands.

NWA RATINGS: 1—Jack Brisco; 2—Shohei "Giant" Baba; 3—Harley Race; 4—Dory Funk Jr.; 5—Paul Jones; 6—The Sheik; 7—Terry Funk; 8—Johnny Valentine; 9—Jerry Lawler; 10—Jose Lothario.

WWF RATINGS: 1—Bruno Sammartino; 2—Mongolian Stomper; 3—George Steele; 4—Waldo Von Erich; 5—Spiros Arion; 6—Chief Jay Strongbow; 7—Ivan Putski; 8—Buggy McGraw; 9—Victor Rivera;

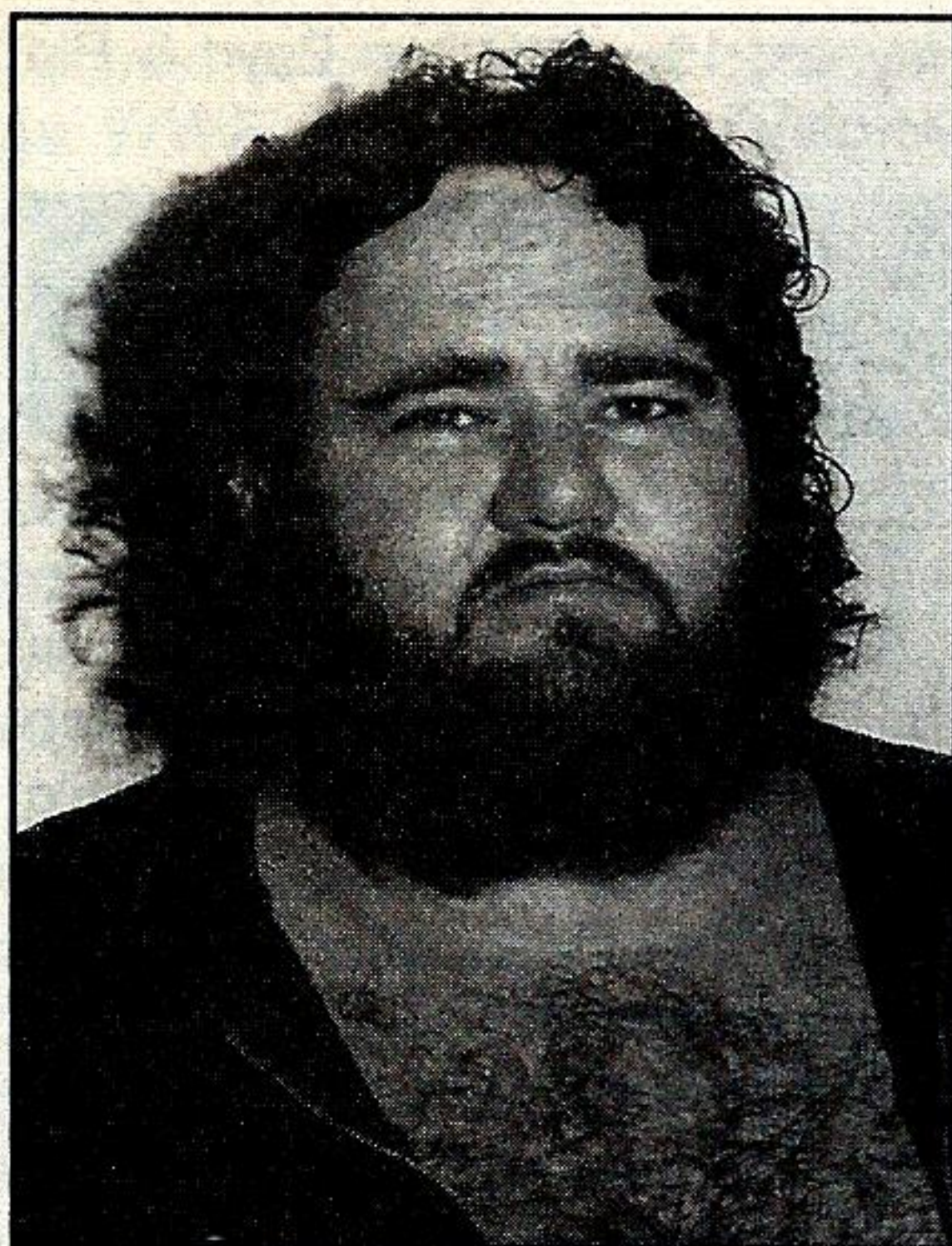
10—Gorilla Monsoon.

AWA RATINGS: 1—Verne Gagne; 2—Billy Robinson; 3—Baron Von Raschke; 4—Nick Bockwinkel; 5—Ray Stevens; 6—Ivan Putski; 7—Dusty Rhodes; 8—Horst Hoffman; 9—Greg Gagne; 10—Boris Breshnikov.

TAG TEAMS: 1—The Blackjacks; 2—The Mongols; 3—Ray Stevens & Nick Bockwinkel; 4—Victor Rivera & Dominic DeNucci; 5—Ole & Gene Anderson; 6—Roger Kirby & Jim Dillon; 7—The Valiants; 8—Goliath & Black Gordman; 9—The Invaders; 10—Paul Jones & Wahoo McDaniel.

JULY/AUGUST 1980

VERNE GAGNE BEAT Nick Bockwinkel in Chicago on August 7 to begin his ninth AWA World title reign ... Mr. Wrestling II came within a hair's breadth of taking the NWA World belt away from champion Harley Race. Wrestling II had thrashed Race from the opening bell and seemed on his way to victory. The referee became entangled between the two combatants and was thrown to the concrete floor, where he was knocked unconscious. Another referee hurried into the ring just in time to administer the three-count on the fallen Race and raise Wrestling II's arm in victory. He walked away from the ring with the belt in his hands, only to be informed moments later that because an alternate referee finished the match, the match was not for the title. Wrestling II tearfully returned the belt ... Before 26,102 fans—the largest crowd in the history of Madison Square Garden up to that time—Bruno Sammartino was disqualified when he literally tried to choke the life out of former protege Larry Zbyszko. "I snapped," Bruno admitted after the match ... Ric Flair and Jimmy Snuka engaged in a wild melee in Greensboro, North Carolina, for the U.S. title. The match ended with Snuka being counted out of the ring ... No one had yet collect-



The late Jerry Blackwell made it through the summer of 1980 before anyone could take him up on his offer of \$1,000 to the first person who could bodyslam him.

ed the \$1,000 that Jerry Blackwell was offering to the first person who could bodyslam him.

NWA RATINGS: 1—Harley Race; 2—Dusty Rhodes; 3—Ric Flair; 4—Mr. Wrestling II; 5—Don Muraco; 6—Austin Idol; 7—Kevin Von Erich; 8—Jim Brunzell; 9—Leroy Brown; 10—Stan Stasiak.

WWF RATINGS: 1—Bob Backlund; 2—Larry Zbyszko; 3—Hulk Hogan; 4—Ken Patera; 5—Pat Patterson; 6—Ivan Putski; 7—Tony Atlas; 8—Pedro Morales; 9—Tito Santana; 10—Bobby Duncum.

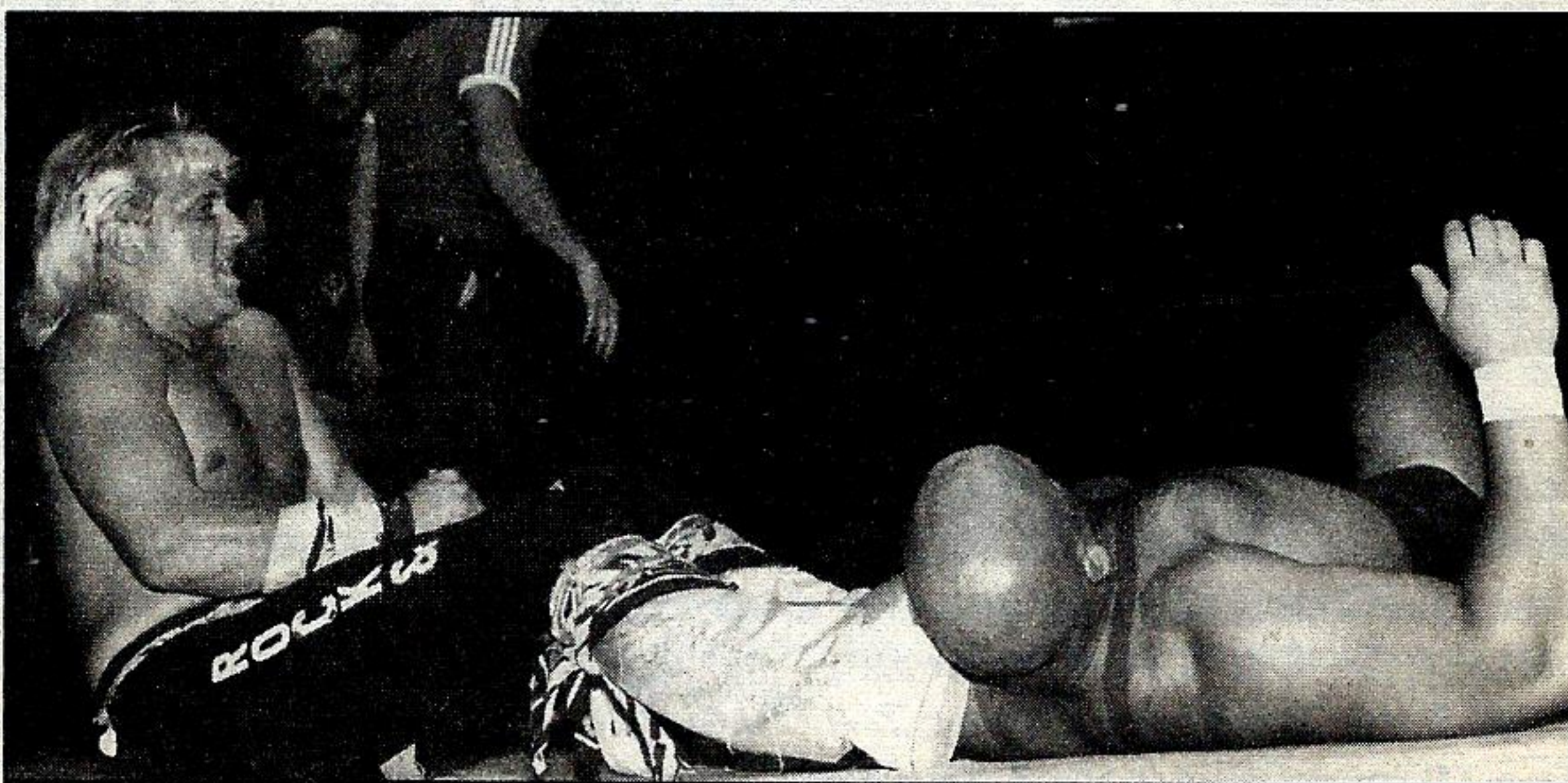
AWA RATINGS: 1—Verne Gagne; 2—Crusher; 3—Dino Bravo; 4—Nick Bockwinkel; 5—Greg Gagne; 6—Billy Robinson; 7—Mad Dog Vachon; 8—Jesse Ventura; 9—

Jerry Lawler; 10—Adrian Adonis.

TAG TEAMS: 1—The Samoans; 2—Greg Valentine & Ray Stevens; 3—Verne Gagne & Mad Dog Vachon; 4—Jack Brisco & Jim Garvin; 5—Kevin Sullivan & Tony Atlas; 6—Ivan Putski & Tito Santana; 7—Masked Superstars; 8—Mr. Hito & Mr. Sakurada; 9—Ivan Koloff & Alexis Smirnoff; 10—Tommy & Eddie Gilbert.

JULY/AUGUST 1985

WITH THE HELP of his valet, Baby Doll, Tully Blanchard defeated Magnum T.A. for the U.S. title on July 21 in Charlotte, North Carolina. Disguised as a security guard, Baby Doll slipped a roll of coins to Blanchard from ringside ... Tito Santana regained the Intercontinental title by defeating Greg Valentine in a steel cage match on July 6 in Baltimore. Valentine was so angry that he ripped the title belt to shreds ... After Hercules Hernandez abruptly vacated both the Florida and the Southern titles, tournaments were established to determine new champions. Rick Rude captured the Southern belt, while Jack Hart won the Florida championship ... The Rock 'n' Roll Express won their first NWA World title with a victory over Ivan Koloff and Krusher Khrushchev on July 9 in Shelby, North Carolina ... Brian Adias ended Gino Hernandez' lengthy Texas title reign with a July



Rick Morton rows away on the arm of Krusher Khrushchev while Ivan Koloff watches helplessly from the corner. Morton and Robert Gibson made off with the Russians' NWA World tag title on July 9, 1985.

29 victory in Fort Worth ... Randy Savage shocked the wrestling world by choosing the previously unknown Elizabeth as his manager ... Ric Flair began circulating a petition asking World Class officials not to sanction any more NWA World title matches with the Von Erichs. It read in part, "We believe that such matches can only cause the Von Erichs definite and serious physical injury." Flair himself was the only one to sign it ... Adrian Street outraged Southeast area wrestlers by painting the Southeast title belt pink ... Greg Valentine and Brutus Beefcake captured the WWF World tag team title from Barry Windham and Mike Rotundo on August 24 in Philadelphia after Beefcake rubbed a lit cigar handed to him by manager Johnny Valiant in Windham's eye ... For the first time in 14 years, wrestling matches were held in Alaska, courtesy of the AWA ... Harley Race won an unprecedented seventh Missouri title when he regained the belt from Jerry Blackwell on August 2 in St. Louis.

NWA RATINGS: 1—Ric Flair; 2—Tully Blanchard; 3—Dusty Rhodes; 4—Nikita Koloff; 5—Black Bart; 6—Rick Rude; 7—Kerry Von Erich; 8—Magnum T.A.; 9—Iceman Parsons; 10—Harley Race.

WWF RATINGS: 1—Hulk Hogan; 2—Tito Santana; 3—Magnificent Muraco; 4—Rick Steamboat; 5—Randy Savage; 6—Paul Orndorff; 7—Roddy Piper; 8—Junkyard Dog; 9—John Studd; 10—Bob Orton.

AWA RATINGS: 1—Rick Martel; 2—Sgt. Slaughter; 3—Larry Zbyszko; 4—Michael Hayes; 5—Nick Bockwinkel; 6—Jim Garvin; 7—Greg Gagne; 8—Kamala; 9—Buck Zumhofe; 10—Ray Stevens.

TAG TEAMS: 1—The Road Warriors; 2—The Rock 'n' Roll Express; 3—Greg Valentine & Brutus Beefcake; 4—Chris Adams & Gino Hernandez; 5—Ole & Arn Anderson; 6—Al Perez & Wendell Cooley; 7—The Midnight Express; 8—Barry Windham & Mike Rotundo; 9—Wahoo McDaniel & Billy Jack

Haynes; 10—Jonathan Boyd & Rip Morgan.

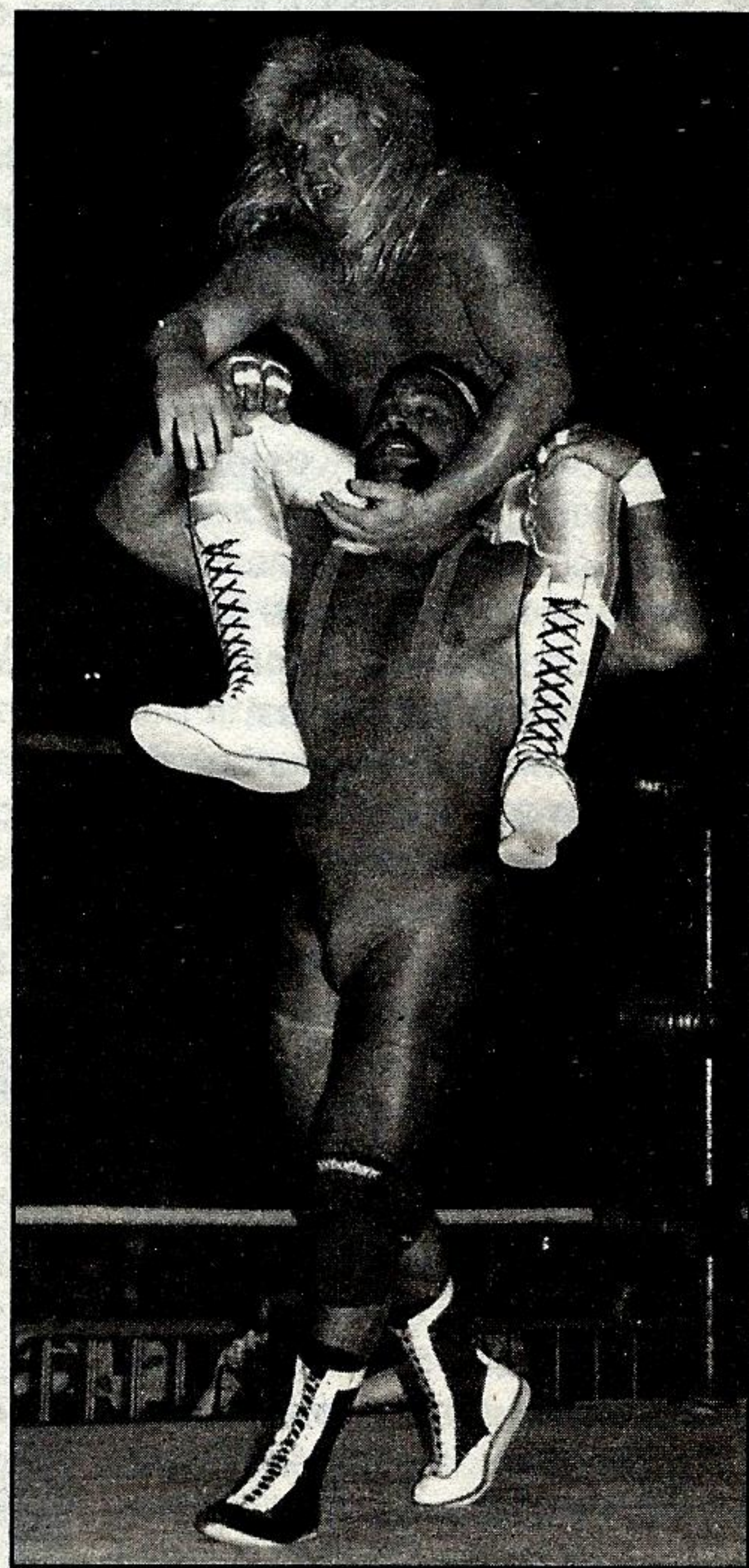
JULY/AUGUST 1990

TWO OF THE WWF's titles changed hands at SummerSlam on August 27 in Philadelphia. Kerry Von Erich defeated "Mr. Perfect" Curt Hennig for the Intercontinental title after Hennig's head was slammed into an iron ringpost. The Hart Foundation won the World tag team title from Demolition in a best-of-three-falls bout, even though they won one fall by disqualification ... Catch Wrestling Association champ Otto Wanz retained his title in a retirement match against Big Van Vader (only Wanz agreed to retire if he lost) ... Jim Cornette became angry with Bobby Eaton, a member of his Midnight Express. Eaton had brawled with Sid Vicious after Sid interfered in one of the Express' matches and accidentally floored Eaton's partner, Stan Lane ... Dustin Rhodes arrived in the WWF to assist his father, Dusty, in a feud with Virgil and Ted DiBiase, who had "bought" the services of Dusty's former manager Sapphire ... Tully Blanchard announced his retirement from wrestling, saying he intended to "spread the gospel of Jesus Christ" ... Jesse Ventura left the WWF's broadcast booth in order to pursue acting opportunities ... AWA World champion Larry Zbyszko showed up at an NWA TV taping in Georgia and challenged NWA World champ Ric Flair to a title-unification match ... A USWA feud between Tessa and "Dirty White Girl" Kimberly heated up after Kimberly beat up Tessa and ripped most of her clothes off after a match in Memphis ... Lex Luger was viciously attacked by The Four Horsemen—Ric Flair, Arn Anderson, Sid Vicious, and

Barry Windham—in the parking lot before an NWA TV taping ... Sgt. Slaughter returned to the WWF as a nasty rulebreaker under the management of Gen. Adnan. He dominated a feud with popular Russian Nikolai Volkoff ... Rick and Scott Steiner won the NWA U.S. tag team title from The Midnight Express on August 24 in East Rutherford, New Jersey ... Chris Adams and his wife, Toni, were involved in a feud with Steve Austin and Jeannie, Adams' ex-wife, in Texas.

NWA RATINGS: 1—Sting; 2—Lex Luger; 3—Ric Flair; 4—Sid Vicious; 5—Arn Anderson; 6—Stan Hansen; 7—Mark Callous; 8—Big Van Vader; 9—Brian Pillman; 10—Barry Windham.

WWF RATINGS: 1—The Ulti-



Bobby Eaton of The Midnight Express watches his NWA U.S. tag team title hopes come crashing down courtesy of a Steiner-line. Rick and Scott Steiner would go on to win many tag team titles.

mate Warrior; 2—Kerry Von Erich; 3—Hulk Hogan; 4—Rick Rude; 5—Curt Hennig; 6—Earthquake; 7—Randy Savage; 8—Jake Roberts; 9—Big Bossman; 10—The Warlord.

AWA RATINGS: 1—Larry Zbyszko; 2—B. Brian Blair; 3—Baron Von Raschke; 4—Harley Race; 5—Brad Rheingans; 6—Buck Zumhofe; 7—Col. DeBeers; 8—Jonnie Stewart; 9—Tommy Jammer; 10—Curtis Hughes.

TAG TEAMS: 1—Doom; 2—The Hart Foundation; 3—Rick & Scott Steiner; 4—Demolition; 5—The Rock 'n' Roll Express; 6—The Midnight Express; 7—Brian Pillman & Tom Zenk; 8—Tracey Smothers & Steve Armstrong; 9—D.J. Peterson & The Trooper; 10—Al Madril & Ricky Santana.

JULY/AUGUST 1995

“THE HEARTBREAK KID” Shawn Michaels defeated Jeff Jarrett in 19:59 to win the Intercontinental title at In Your House II on July 23. One month into his reign, Michaels defended the belt against Razor Ramon in a thrilling ladder match at SummerSlam ... The war for ECW's TV title intensified when Dean Malenko defeated Eddy Guerrero in front of a hometown crowd in Tampa, Florida, on July 1. Guerrero recaptured the belt just one week later in Middletown, New York ... Harlem Heat's second reign as WCW World tag team champions ended on July 22, when Bunkhouse Buck and Dick Slater defeated Stevie Ray and Booker T to win the title ... Shinya Hashimoto and Junji Hirata defeated Scott Norton and Mike Enos to win the IWGP International tag team title in Sapporo, Japan, on July 13. The title was declared vacant a few days before the card when it was determined that champions Masa Chono and Hiroyoshi Tenzan would not be able to defend the belts due to the death of Chono's father ... To the delight of many WWF fans, Jack

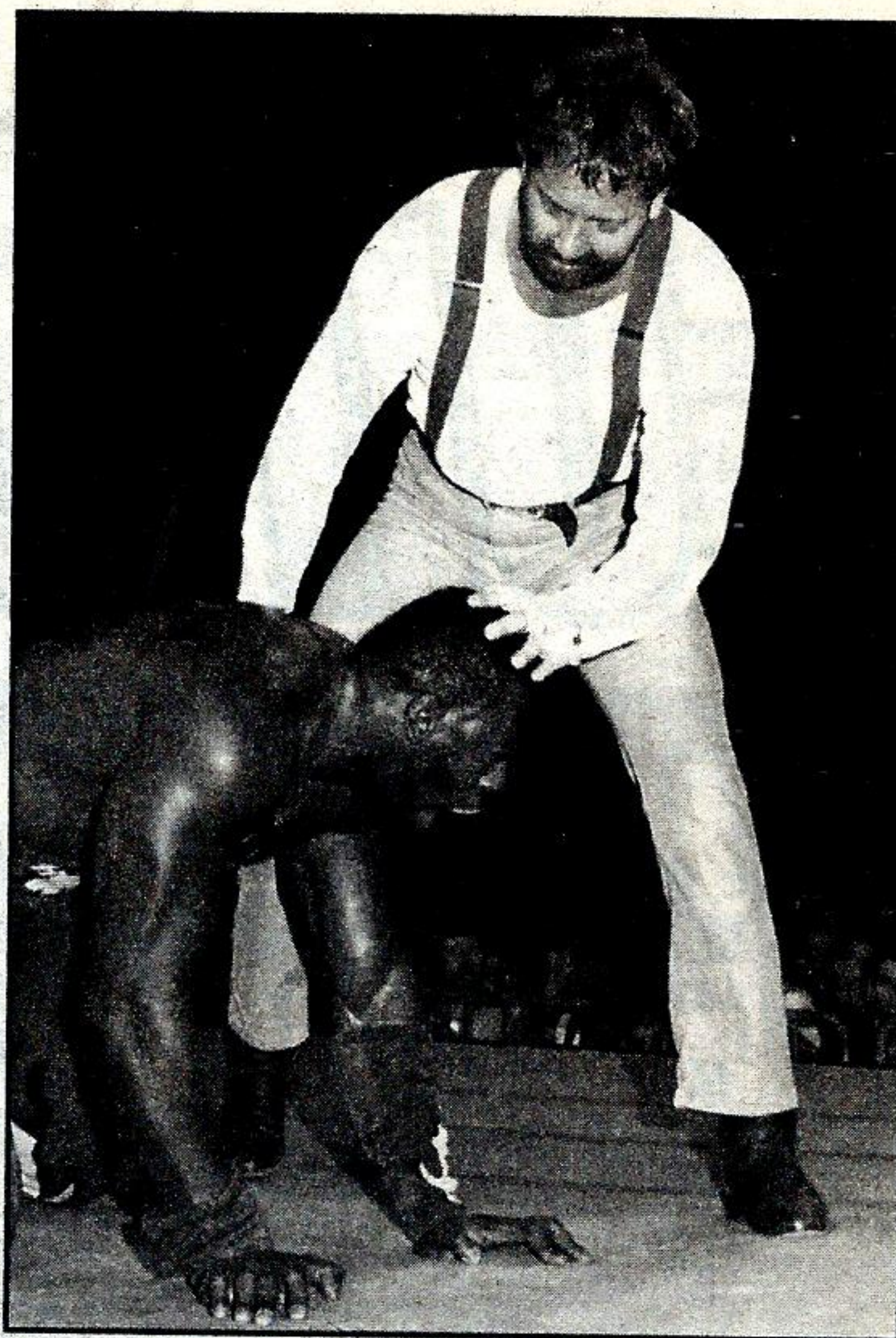
Tunney resigned his post as WWF president ... Jerry Lawler and Jos LeDuc rekindled an old feud that could be traced back to the 1970s. When asked why he and LeDuc were still fighting almost 20 years later, Lawler replied, “He ... well, I was ... wait a minute, now I remember. He ... no, that was somebody else” ... The sixth annual “*PW/500*” was compiled. The top five wrestlers in order were Diesel, Shawn Michaels, Sting, Bret Hart, and Sabu ... Bertha Faye pinned Alundra Blayze (Madusa) to win the WWF women's title at SummerSlam on August 27.

WCW RATINGS: 1—Hulk Hogan; 2—Sting; 3—Randy Savage; 4—The Renegade; 5—Vader; 6—Ric Flair; 7—Meng; 8—Dallas Page; 9—Paul Orndorff; 10—Kamala.

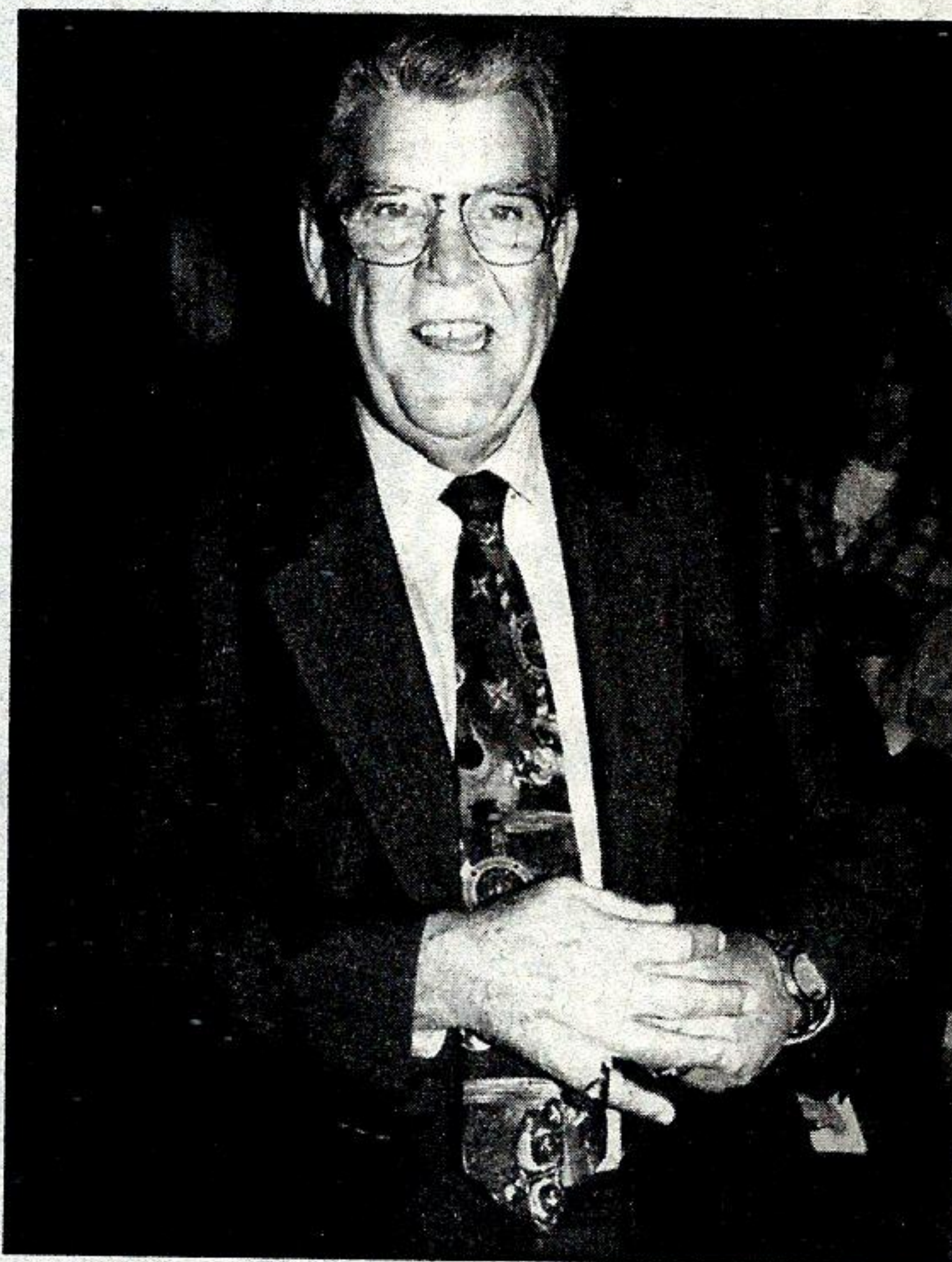
WWF RATINGS: 1—Diesel; 2—Shawn Michaels; 3—Bret Hart; 4—Razor Ramon; 5—Savio Vega; 6—Bam Bam Bigelow; 7—Sid Vicious; 8—Mabel; 9—The Undertaker; 10—Jean-Pierre Lafitte.

ECW RATINGS: 1—The Sandman; 2—Cactus Jack; 3—Eddy Guerrero; 4—Tommy Dreamer; 5—2 Cold Scorpio; 6—Tasmaniac; 7—Marty Jannetty; 8—Dean Malenko; 9—911; 10—Luna Vachon.

TAG TEAMS: 1—Owen Hart & Yokozuna; 2—Lex Luger & Davey Boy Smith; 3—Bunkhouse Buck & Dick Slater; 4—Harlem Heat; 5—Raven & Stevie Richards; 6—Tony Anthony & Tracey Smothers; 7—PG-13; 8—



Bunkhouse Buck and Dick Slater ended the second WCW title reign of Harlem Heat in July 1995, but Booker T and Stevie Ray rebounded quickly to win their tag belts back.

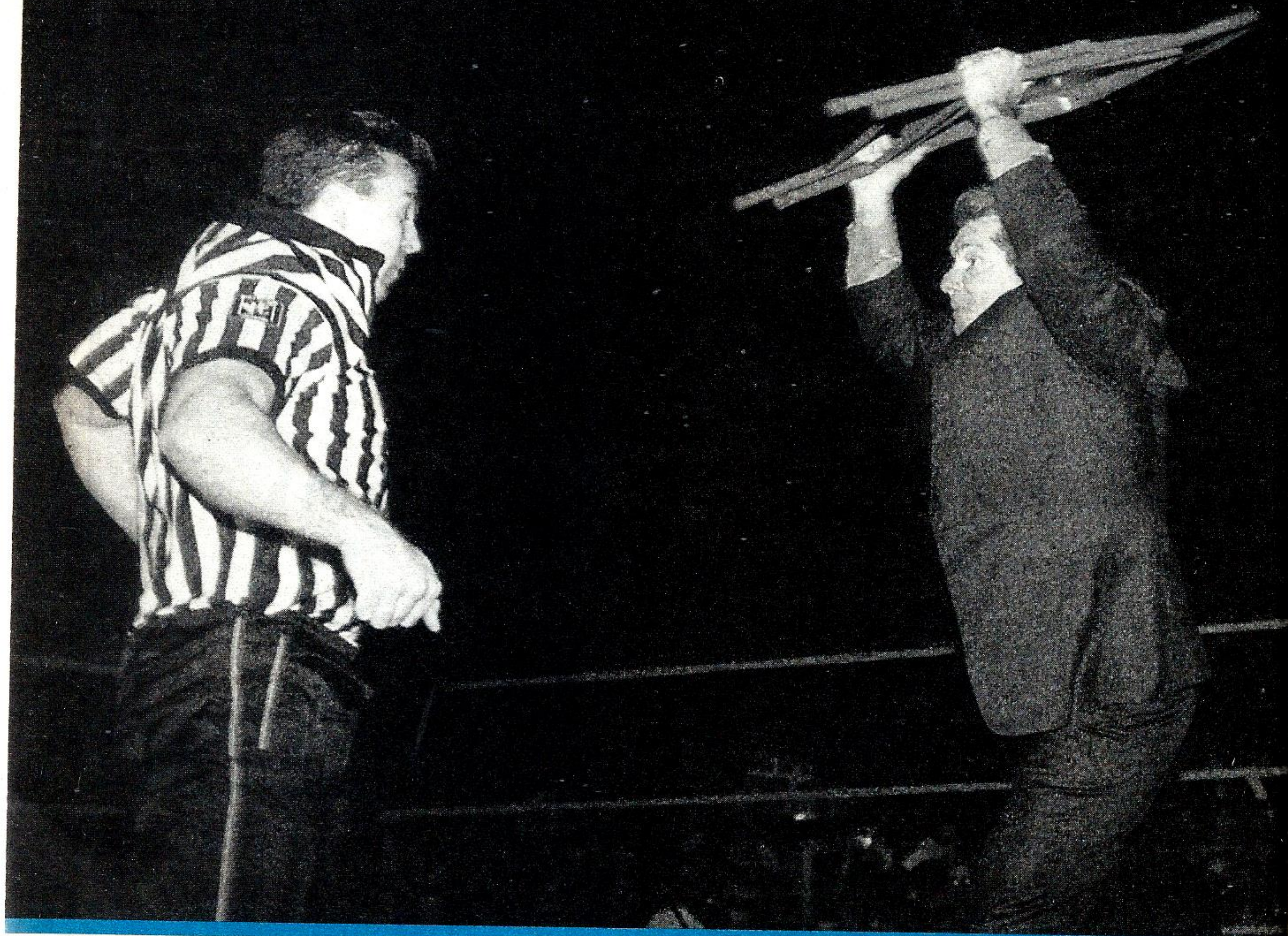


Few fans—or wrestlers, for that matter—shed tears the day Jack Tunney resigned as president of the WWF in 1995.

Bobby Eaton & Lord Steven Regal; 9—The Nasty Boys; 10—Eli & Jacob Blu. □

WE'RE Con-Vinced!

**THIS ATTACK SAVED
THE WWF!**



Photos by Frank Vitucci

It's not often we condone someone interfering in a critical match and smashing a chair over a referee's head, but in this case, Vince McMahon did just what the WWF needed him to do

By Dan Murphy

JUST FOR FUN, let's pretend Vince McMahon *didn't* clobber his son with a chair and interfere in The Rock's match against The Big Show on March 13. Shut out of the WrestleMania 2000 main event, The Rock put his career on the line on *Raw*. If he lost, he would presumably have to join

Mick Foley in the unemployment line, and Triple-H would defend the WWF title against Show at WrestleMania. With The Big Show on a winning streak, Shane refereeing the match, and Stephanie, Triple-H, and DX lurking nearby, the odds were pretty good that The Rock's WWF career was coming to a premature conclusion.

That might have meant no Rock

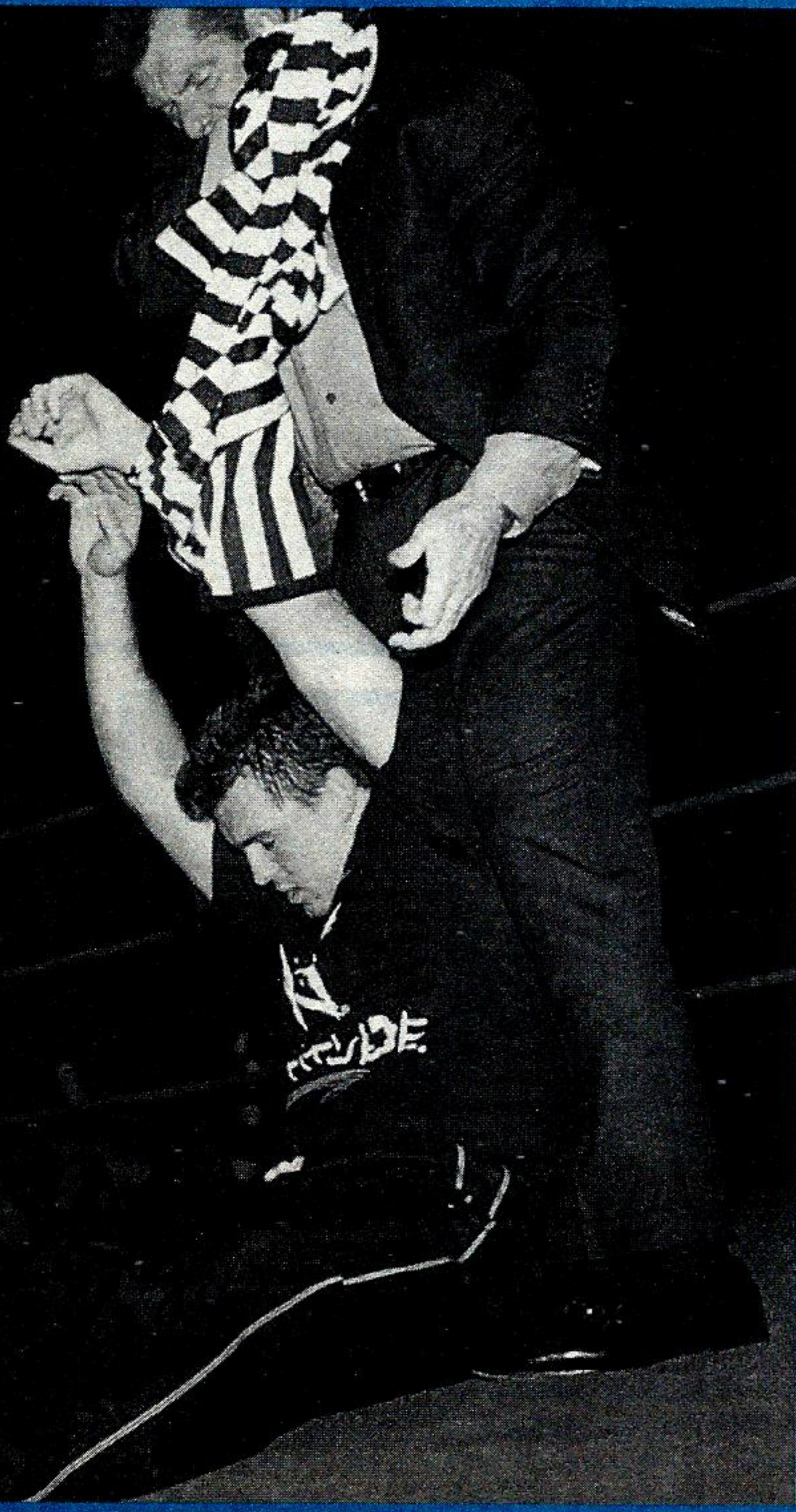
on *Saturday Night Live*. That would have meant a WrestleMania without The Rock. Without Steve Austin. Without The Undertaker. Maybe even without Mick Foley. A WrestleMania without any of the WWF's most popular superstars. In other words, an utter disaster.

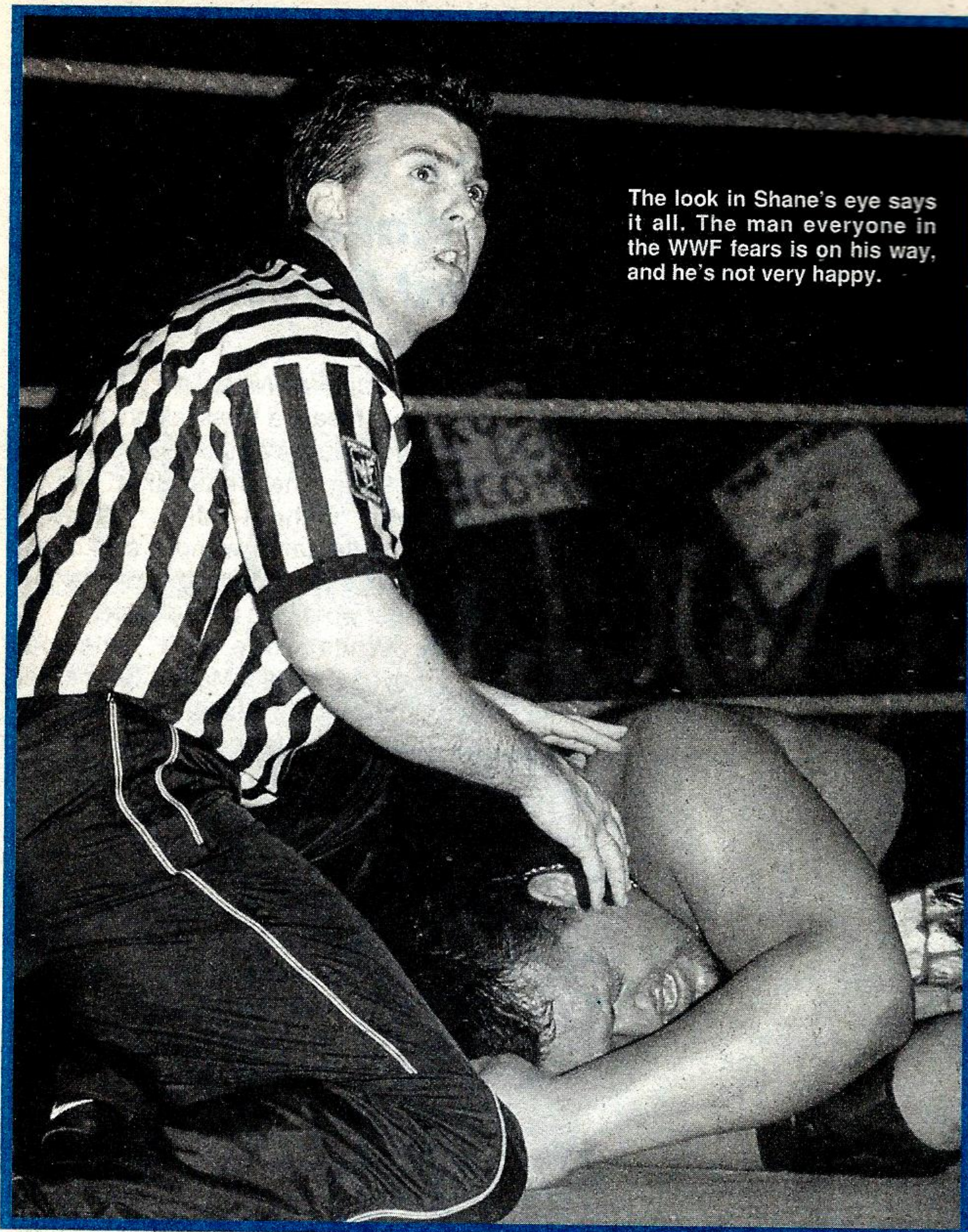
While we're at it, let's look beyond WrestleMania. Shane and Stephanie McMahon would continue

their battle for federation control. Any wrestler who dared to threaten their power—like Foley and The Rock—would be run straight out of the WWF. If Stephanie seized total power, we could have expected to see Road Dogg and X-Pac headlining the next few pay-per-views. If Shane seized power, there was a good chance The Mean Street Posse would end up with the tag team and Intercontinental titles. It doesn't matter how many consecutive weeks *Raw* has won the ratings war against *Nitro*; a few weeks of Pete Gas vs. Crash Holly in the main event would cause *Raw*'s ratings to plunge lower than Jennifer Lopez' neckline.

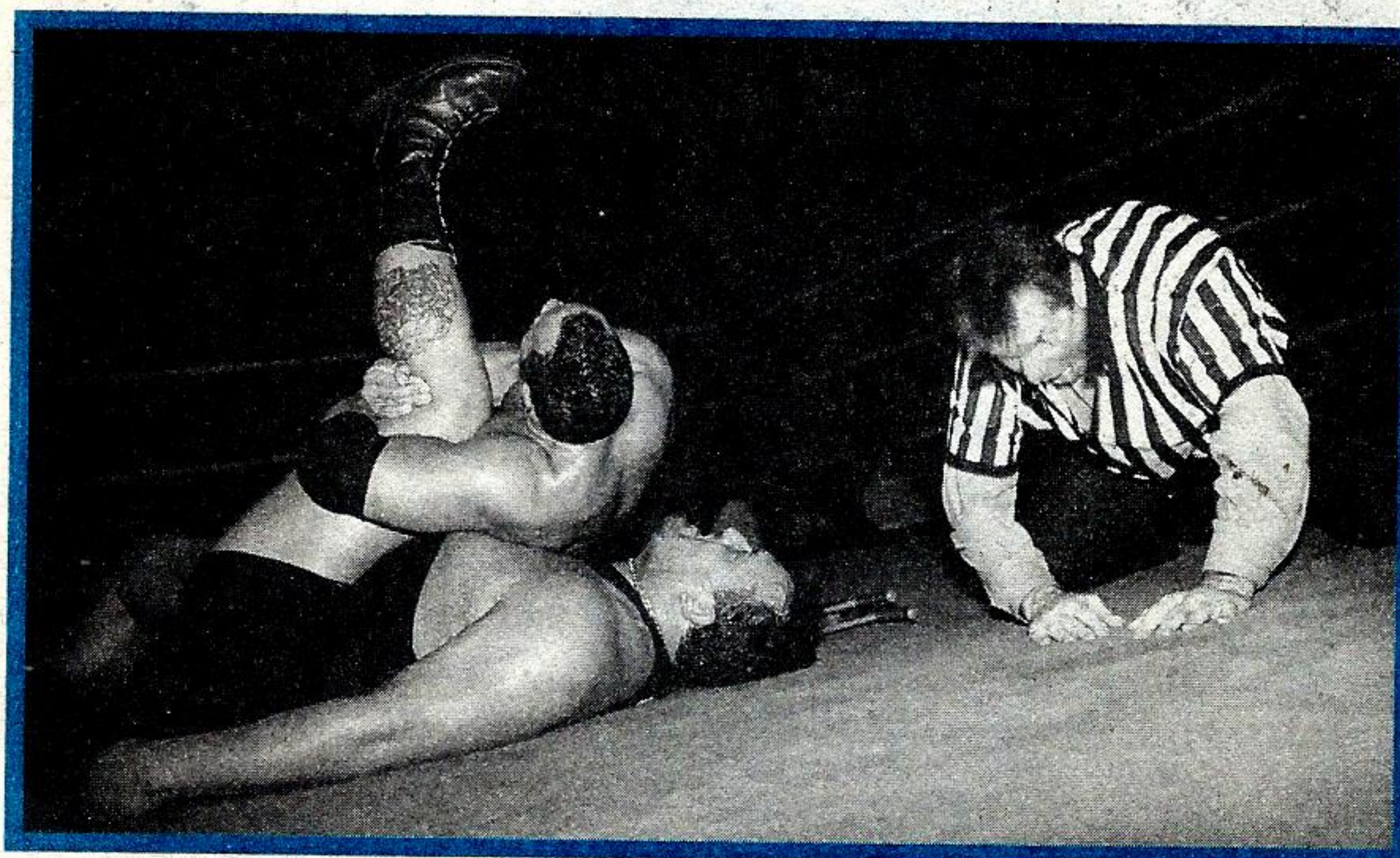
Luckily for the federation, the fans, and (as they found out soon enough) Stephanie and Shane themselves, Vince McMahon *did* take matters into his own hands on *Raw* that night. Vince ended his self-imposed exile from TV, felled the WWF champion with one punch, laid out his son with a punch

Shane McMahon may be too old for a spanking from his dad, but a right cross (see front cover) and a chair shot (opposite page) serve the purpose. "If you are going to be a referee in the WWF," Vince says (right), "you're going to work on my behalf!"





The look in Shane's eye says it all. The man everyone in the WWF fears is on his way, and he's not very happy.



After thrashing his son and Triple-H, Vince donned the stripes to make the three-count that preserved The Rock's career and the future of the WWF. Of course, we found out later that he's not as big a supporter of The Rock as he insisted he was.

and a chair shot, and personally made the three mat slaps that saved the WWF from self-destructing. In less than 10 minutes, he served notice that Vince McMahon—not just any McMahon—rules in any and all matters in *his* federation.

Numerous credible locker room sources say that what happened at the end of *Raw* on March 13 deeply troubled Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley and that her demeanor backstage (when the cameras weren't on her) changed dramatically after she watched her father manhandle her brother and her husband with such ease.

"When she first betrayed Vince, you could see in the way Stephanie carried herself that she was a little worried he'd come back on TV and punish her," said one veteran WWF wrestler. "When a few weeks and then a few months went by and Vince was focused on the XFL, she thought she'd won and that we'd never see her dad on TV again. She thought the WWF was hers and maybe Shane's to run. She was a wreck those first few days after he returned. I

don't know how she managed to pull herself together, go back on TV, and act like him being back didn't bother her in the least."

So as *WrestleMania* drew nearer, Stephanie started thinking and started talking to her husband about a possible reconciliation with Vince. After all, she didn't want Vince to follow through on his threat to "blister her fanny." Even worse, there was all the inheritance money she stood to lose if the rift between her and her father became a permanent one.

That punch showed Stephanie that Vince was serious about doing things his way. It showed everyone that Vince was back in charge. And it in essence brought Vince

and Stephanie back together.

Unfortunately, the story didn't have a happy ending for everyone. It would have if Vince meant what he said when he announced he'd be in The Rock's corner at WrestleMania. Literally speaking, he was. But he wasn't about to let The Rock walk out of WrestleMania as the WWF champion. He again demonstrated how powerful he was when he screwed The Rock out of the title by laying him out with two chair shots at WrestleMania.

It wasn't until the night after Mania that Shane officially made his peace with his dad. He eyed Vince warily as they shook hands in the ring on April 3. With Shane having as big an ego as he does, he couldn't very well have come groveling back to Vince the night after Vince bashed him with that steel chair. He had to keep up the fight—show his father he wasn't afraid to go to war with him—for at least a few weeks. When he was reminded at WrestleMania of what an evil genius his father can

be, when he decided that war was not winnable, especially with his protégé, The Big Show, looking to break away from him, he, too, joined in the McMahon family reunion.

Before you complain about how unbearable it is to have three pompous, obnoxious McMahons on the same side, consider for a moment the alternative.

Under the Stephanie-Triple-H regime, we saw The Hardy Boyz turned against one another. We saw Kane wrestle several ridiculous

handicap matches. We saw entire *Raw* cards reworked for Triple-H and Stephanie's amusement. And Shane demonstrated a willingness to do the exact same thing whenever he got the chance. Left to run the WWF, Shane and Steph probably would have kept trying to one-up each other. If Triple-H, Road Dogg, and X-Pac couldn't do all of Stephanie's bidding, she'd force Kurt Angle, Tazz, and Chris Jericho to fight on her behalf. And maybe Shane would give Edge, Chris

Benoit, and Test no other choice but to join *his* side and fight Steph's group.

Instead of *Raw Is War*, we'd be seeing *Raw Is Shane And Stephanie* every Monday night. As long as the united McMahons concentrate on The Rock, at least the rest of the WWF superstars can at least try to go about their normal business from week to week.

Whether they care to admit it or not, they have Vince McMahon to thank for it. □

Steph, Shane, Triple-H, and Big Show (below) angered Vince by conducting business that best suited their agendas, not the agenda of the WWF. Although he recruited many people in his war against Steve Austin (bottom), Vince has provided a more stable environment for the WWF wrestlers to compete in.

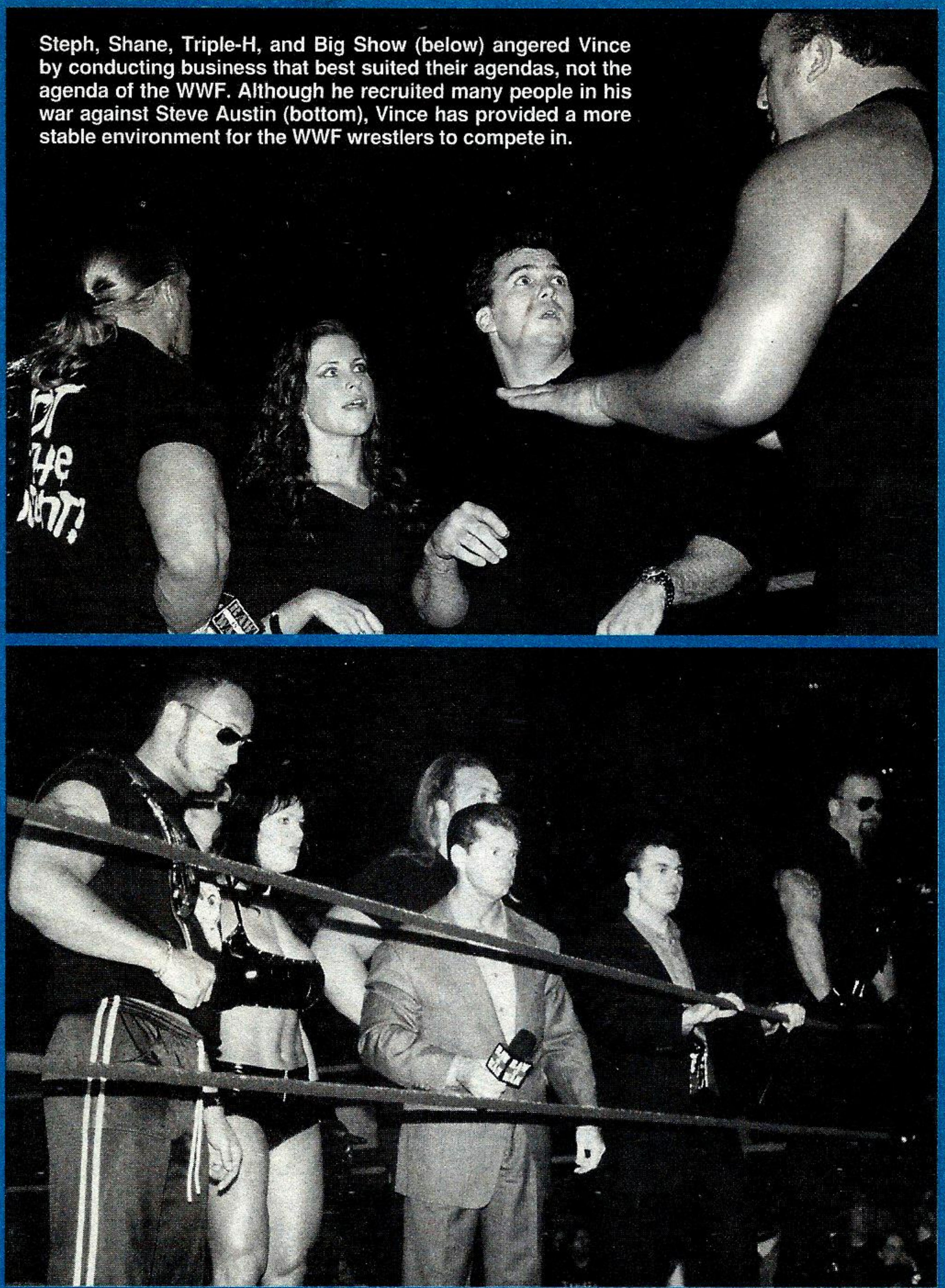
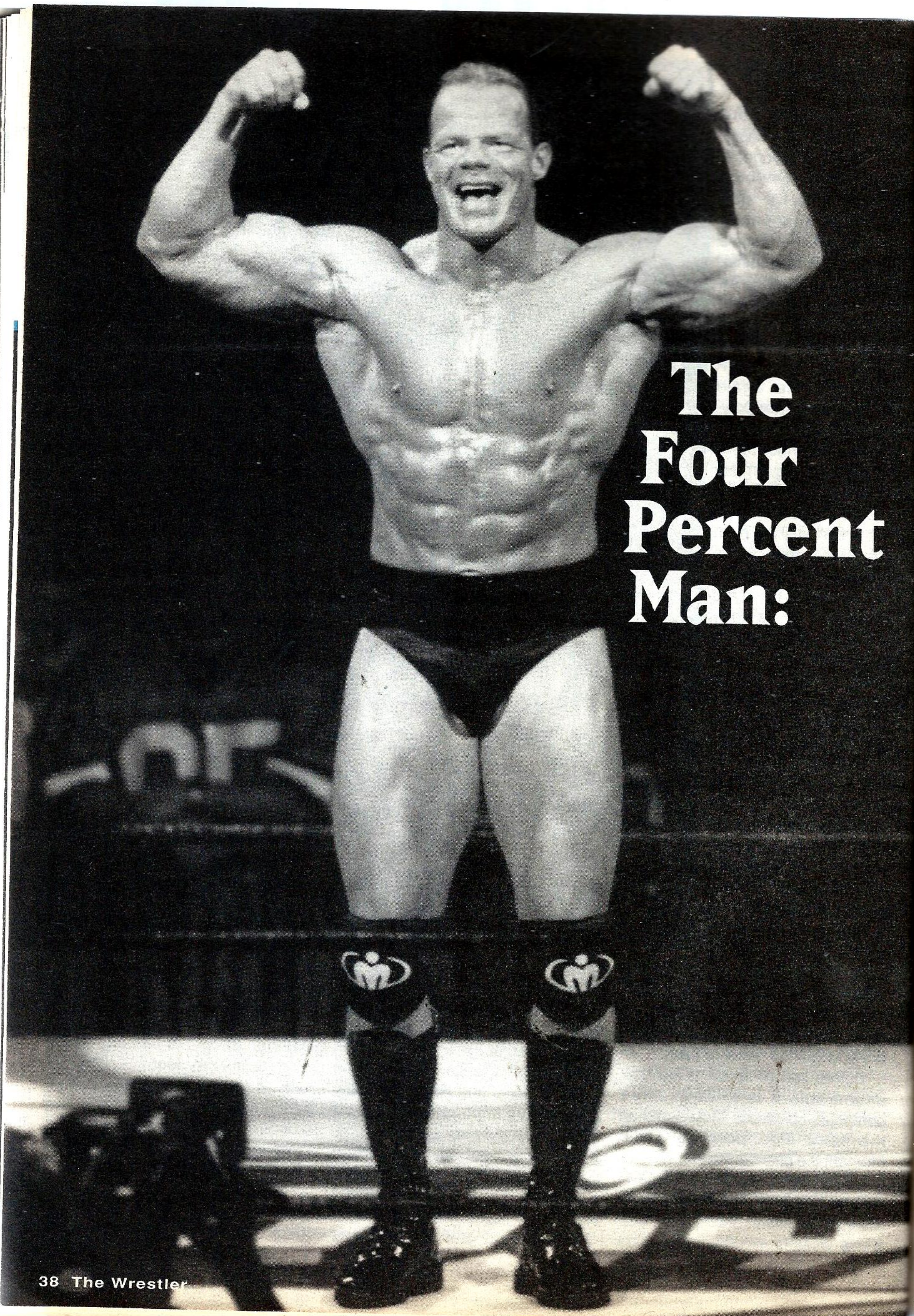


Photo by John S. Pithers



**The
Four
Percent
Man:**

what's LEX LUGER to do with that 11 pounds of ugly fat?

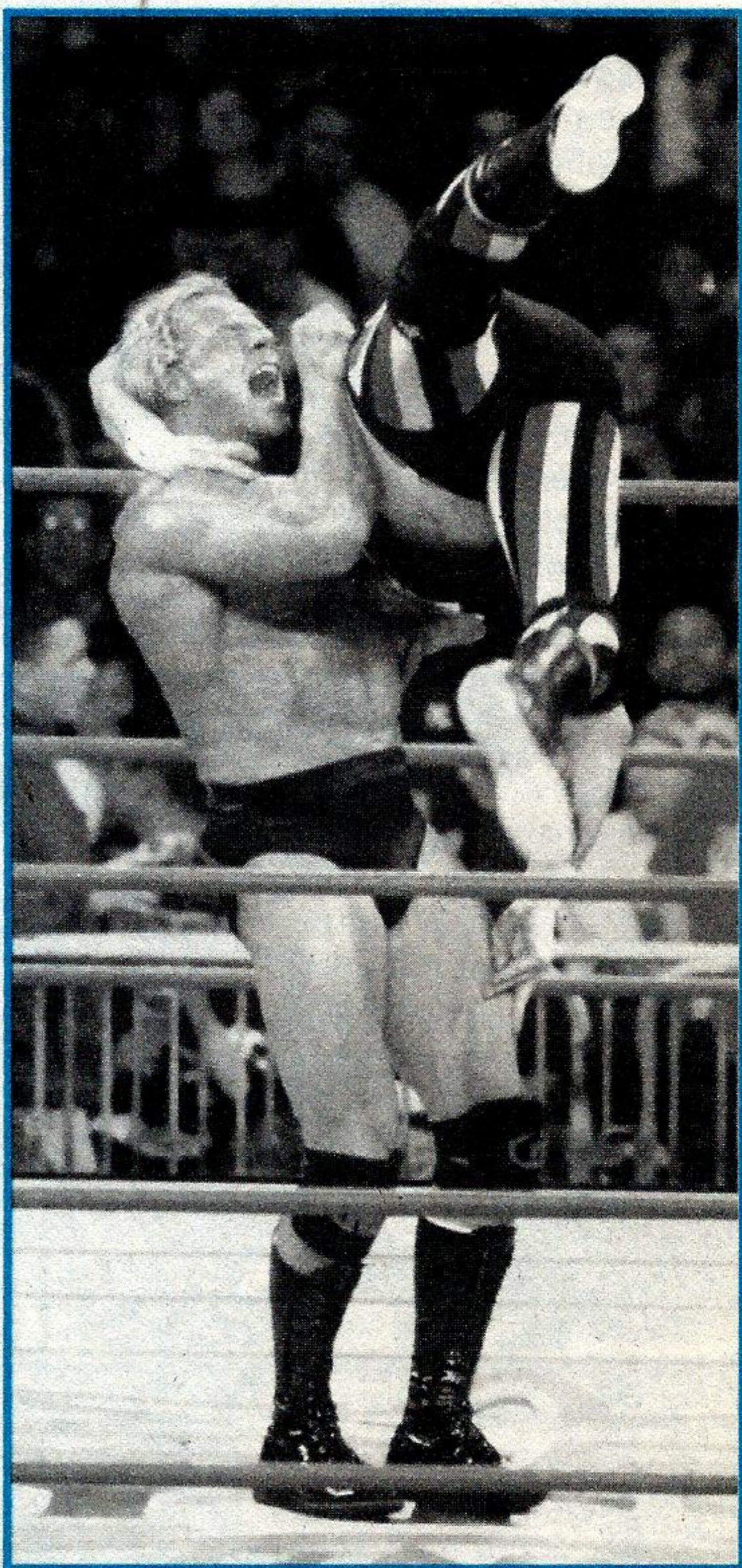
Lex Luger definitely has something to brag about. Four percent body fat on a 275-pound man? That's remarkable! Is he finally satisfied ... or is that remaining 11 pounds of fat nagging him every minute of every day?

IT'S BECOME THE best-known personal statistic in wrestling today. Why? Because Lex Luger won't let us forget it. Of course, we're talking about Luger's persistent claim that he possesses only four teeny-tiny percentage points of body fat. To look at Luger's physique, there's little doubt it's true.

He is, indeed, The Total Package.

This kind of personal stat feeds Luger's enormous ego. Two WCW World titles aren't enough for Luger. It doesn't really matter that he's been a main-eventer for nearly 15 years. Championship gold and career longevity aren't sufficient bragging rights for Luger. It's all about Luger ... and Luger's body.

"What you're looking at is the



Lex Luger uses all 264 pounds of muscle (plus 11 pounds of body fat) to hoist Terry Funk into suplex position. Luger is conscious of the proper execution ... and he wants to look good doing it.

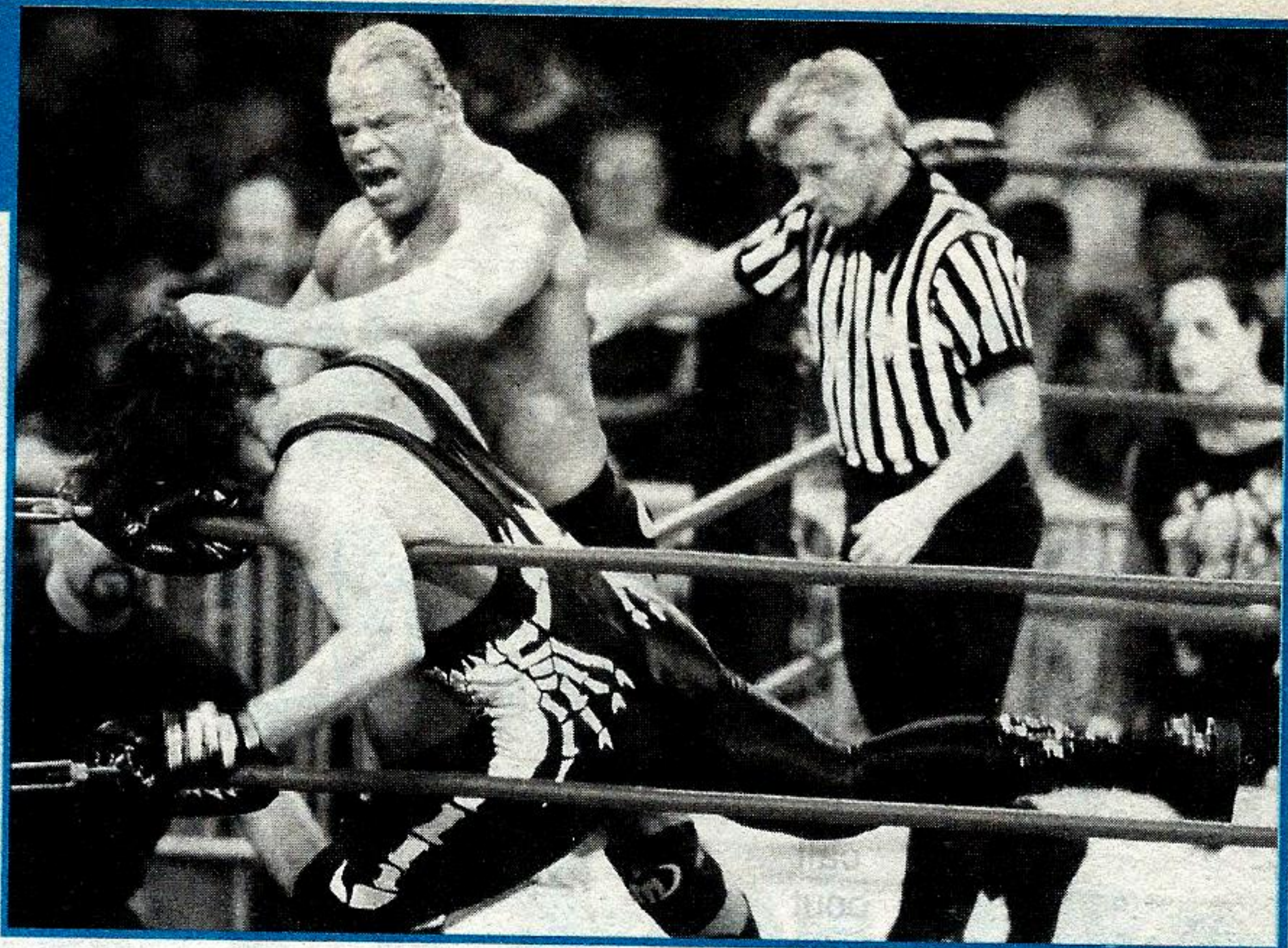
most phenomenal physical specimen in sports today," said the man who's known simply as Package to his friends. "Check out the traps, the delts, the abs." Luger made a sweeping gesture down his stomach. He wiggled his

Sting, a long-time friend of Luger, is much happier feuding with Lex because he no longer has to endure long road trips listening to the Package brag about his physique.

pectoral muscles. "Look at the pecs. Is there another chest in professional wrestling that looks like this?"

Probably not. And there definitely hasn't been another wrestler who has maintained such an impressive physique over so many years. Luger's physique is more defined now than it was when he debuted in October 1985. Even then, because of his body, he was touted as the next Hulk Hogan.

The former USFL football player didn't hesitate to trade his helmet for wrestling trunks. "It was a logical choice, wasn't it?" asked Luger, matter-of-factly. "Why should I let my fantastic physique



smother underneath elbow pads, shoulder pads, and a football jersey? You don't know how many times I wanted to tear off that jersey and pose for the crowd. In wrestling, I could put my body to the best use."

Wrestling requires less gear and provides a forum for Luger to flex his muscles. But, if Luger is interested only in showcasing his body, why didn't he become a professional bodybuilder?

Actually, Luger did do that for a brief time in 1992, when Vince McMahon founded the short-lived World Bodybuilding Federation. A motorcycle accident and surgery that required a metal plate to be placed in his arm side-tracked Luger's bodybuilding career and McMahon's WBF. When Luger did enter the WBF, his body was more honed than ever.

"Lex Luger is one of the few guys whose body has actually improved over the years," said WCW commentator Bobby Heenan, his former adviser. "So many ex-

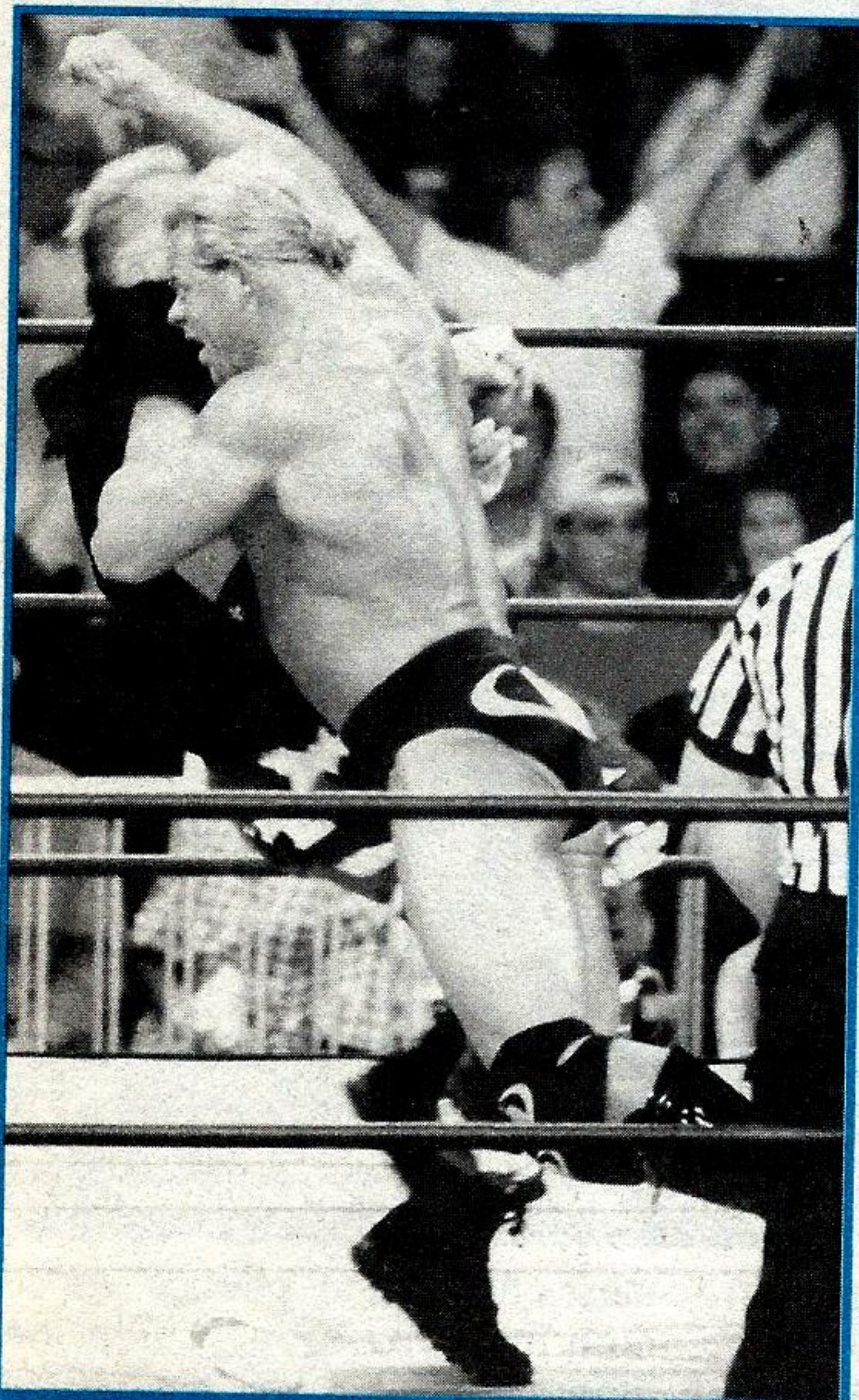
football players get involved in wrestling, and by the time they hit their late-30s, they're toting around a beer gut. Not Luger. Nothing gets him jazzed up like a good workout—and a posedown in the mirror afterward."

Surely, Luger's body fat has been below 10 percent his entire career. Today, Luger is at his heaviest weight, 275 pounds, and is sporting his lowest percentage of body fat, which is four percent. Do the math. Luger has only 11 pounds of body fat, an astonishing statistic for a man his size. Can one blame him for bragging about it every chance he gets? But what started this four-percent body fat kick, anyway?

"Look, The Total Package is *not* bragging," Elizabeth told THE WRESTLER. "His body is his most impressive attribute. Package has always said he has the best body in wrestling. He's simply backing it up with numbers. If people don't like that, they're probably jealous."

Whether a rulebreaker or fan favorite, Luger's obsession with his physique is legendary. Not so much his obsession with training, which he obviously does, but his obsession with talking about it. Endlessly.

Some of Luger's former friends are actually grateful to be his ene-

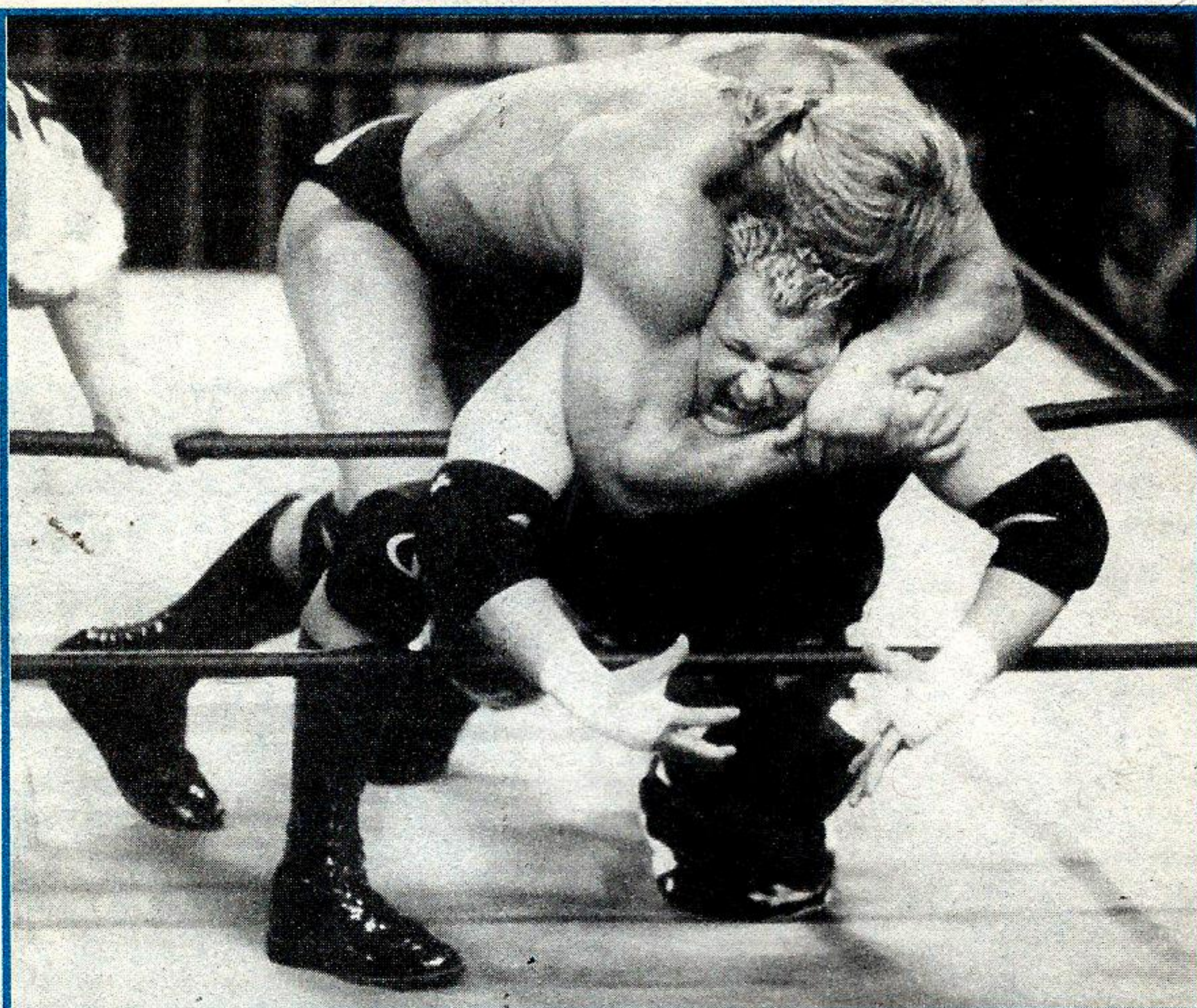


When you're packing 275 pounds of muscle (minus 11 pounds of body fat, of course) like The Total Package is, an ordinary forearm smash can become a lethal finishing maneuver.

mies now. A popular joke in the WCW locker room is they'd rather have Luger break their arms than listen to his incessant ego-patting. To many of his fellow wrestlers, the torture rack is preferable to sharing a rental car with him on a long trip.

"Hearing Luger brag about his four percent body fat week after week is extremely funny to me," said Sting, who co-owned an Atlanta gym with Luger. "Finally, the general public is hearing the tripe I had to listen to for years. Those few pounds of fat that are left are probably driving him crazy. Ten years ago, he'd call me on the phone and brag about having only seven percent body fat before I could spit out a simple hello. Five years ago, he was bragging about his six percent body fat. I was like, 'Geez, give it a break, Lex.'"

Luger's tremendous success in the ring and in the mirror can be attributed directly to his vanity. Would Luger be as successful without the ego?



Hard to tell if Luger is cutting off the oxygen to Brian Knobbs' brain or merely flexing his guns for the crowd. Titles and accolades are secondary to Lex these days. He's more concerned about everyone noticing his body.

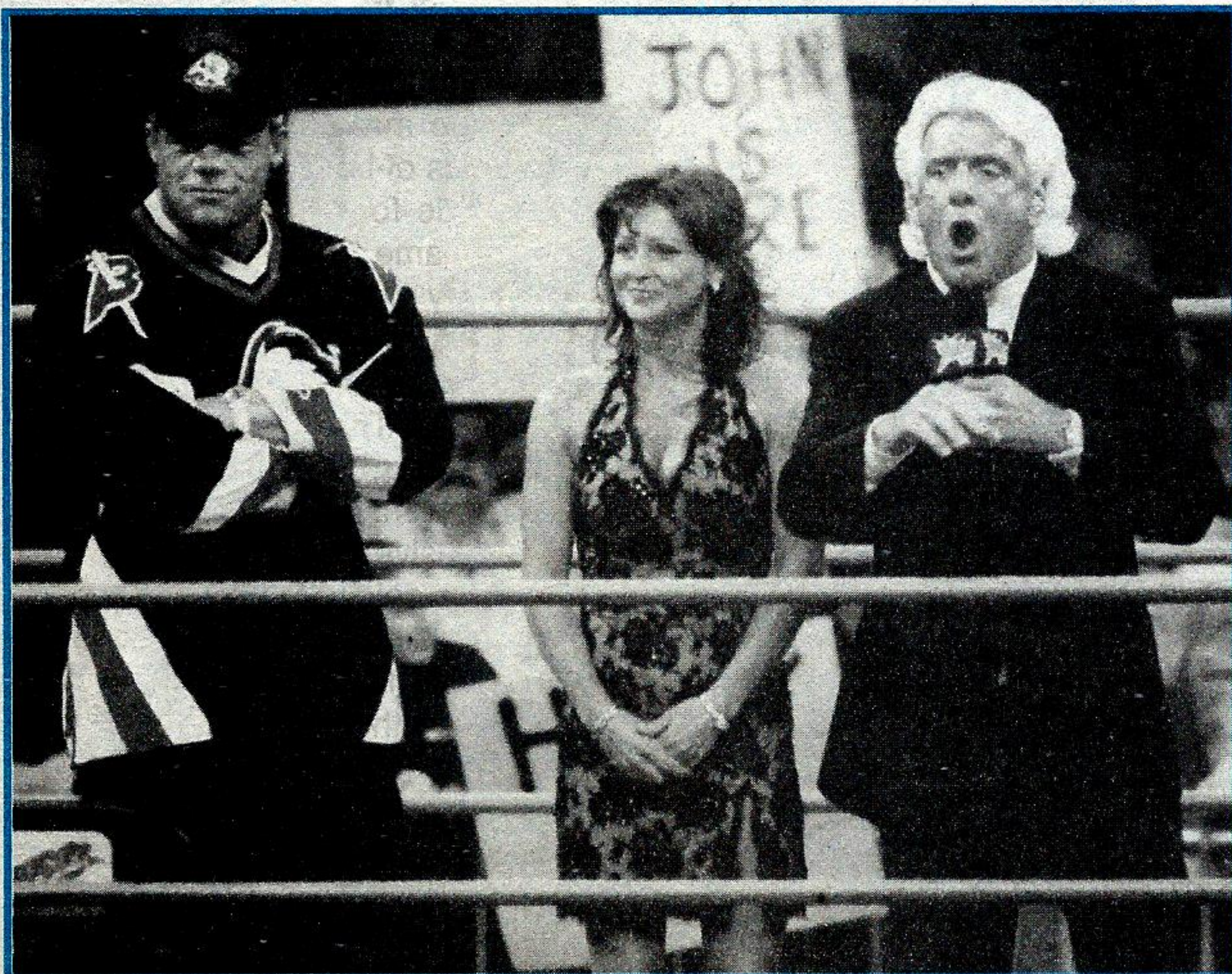
"Absolutely not," replied Heenan. "You can't survive in this sport without an ego. Even those so-called heroes who kiss babies and

sign autographs are doing it because of their egos. A big ego allows you to set high expectations for yourself, even when other people don't give you a chance. Luger's ego forces him to meet, then surpass his own high standards."

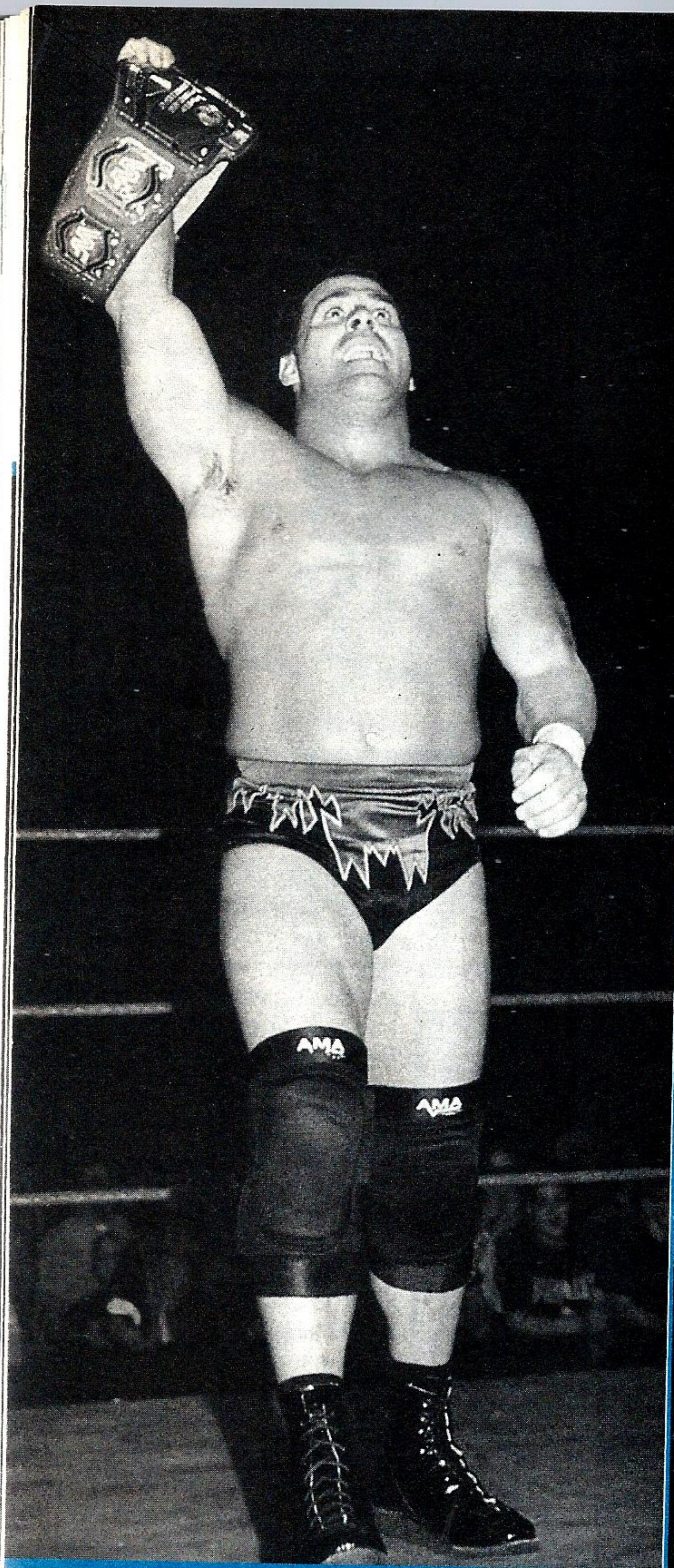
What's next? Three percent body fat? Two percent? Could he reach one percent without being carried to a hospital? Now that he's reached the four percent goal, what's next on Luger's agenda?

"Four percent is about as good as a person can get, as far as I'm concerned," said Luger. "But being the perfectionist I am, I can always do better. Maybe 3.5 percent someday. My next goal is to be the first four percent body fat WCW World champion."

If low body fat determined who should be champion, Luger would be handed the title belt tomorrow. As it is, he might have to stop focusing on his body and concentrate a little more on his opponents. □

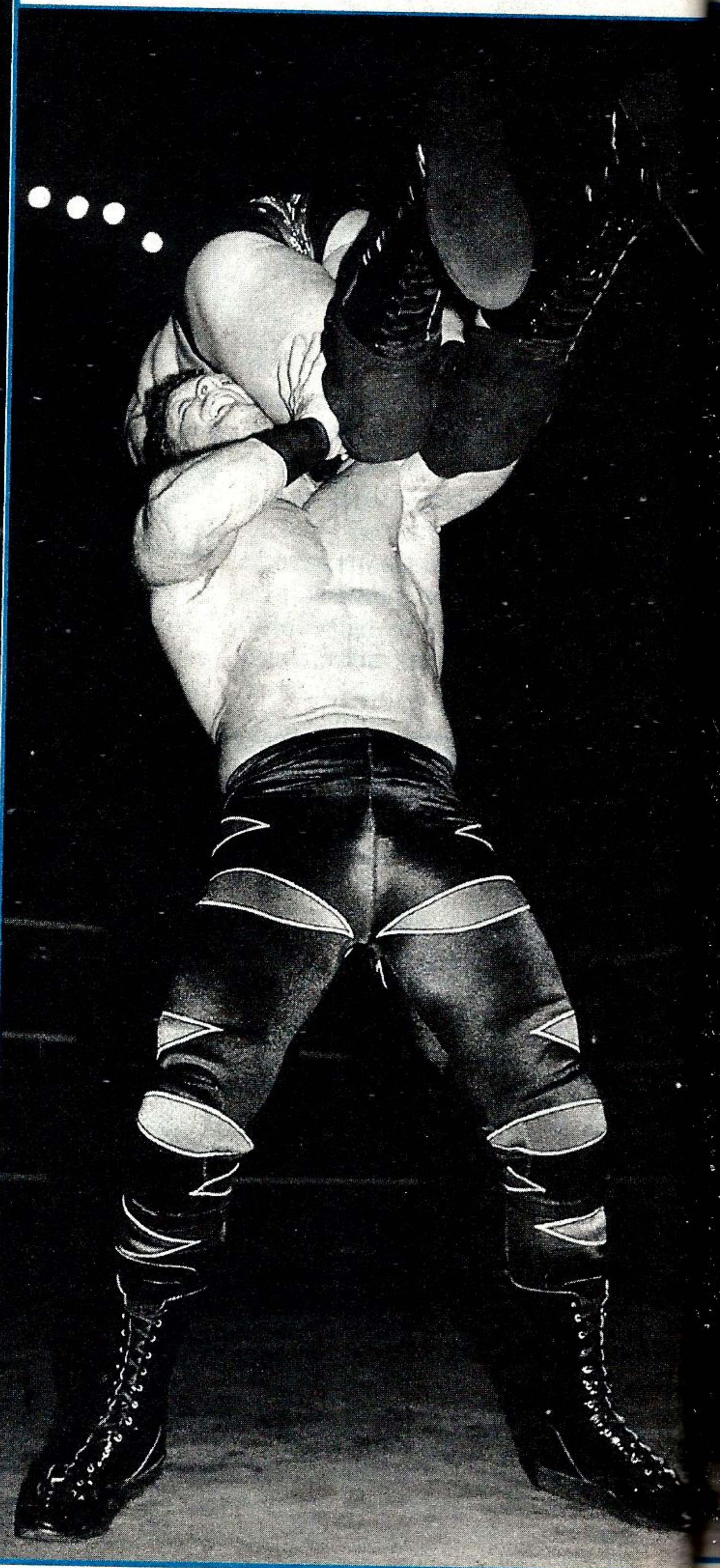


Luger and Liz have teamed with Ric Flair to form Team Package in WCW. Given Luger's sculpted physique and Liz' curvaceous figure, we can assume the "Nature Boy" is the brains of the outfit.



Have The Radicals made an impact in the WWF since jumping from WCW? Well, Dean Malenko has won the light heavyweight title (above), and Chris Benoit has defeated the federation's premier superstar, The Rock (right). These guys know there is no room—or excuse—for failure in the WWF.

WILL THE



RADICALS BURN UP UNDER THE WWF SPOTLIGHT?

THE JUMP OF BENOIT, MALENKO, GUERRERO, AND SATURN TO THE WWF WAS SUDDEN AND DRAMATIC. BY SWITCHING FEDERATIONS, HOWEVER, THE RADICALS PUT EVEN MORE PRESSURE ON THEMSELVES TO SUCCEED

By Liz Hunter

GONE IS THE self-assuredness of The Radicals as they walk through the backstage area. Gone is the unconditional acceptance by arena crowds. Gone is the earned respect of their peers.

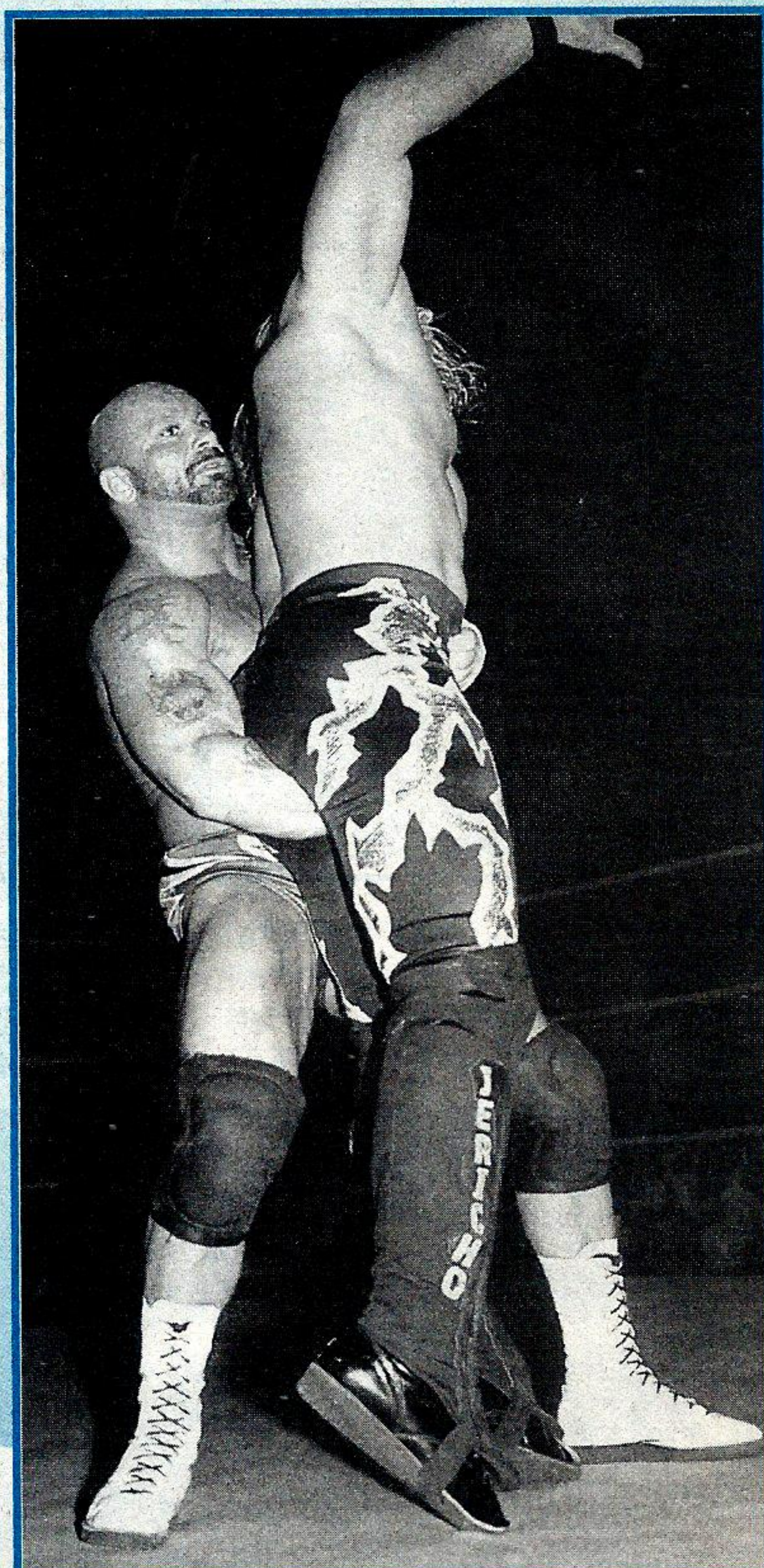
The Radicals' world has changed ... quickly.

Despite their complaints against the company's management, WCW had been a comfortable home for the four men. Chris Benoit, Dean Malenko, and Eddy Guerrero were mainstays for five years. Perry Saturn arrived in

1997. Although all four were limited to the mid-card tier of the federation during most of their time there, all four also collected healthy paychecks and were on good terms with most of their fellow competitors.

They were WCW's bread and butter. They were the guys who could light up the undercard just enough to make fans forget about some of those disappointing main events.

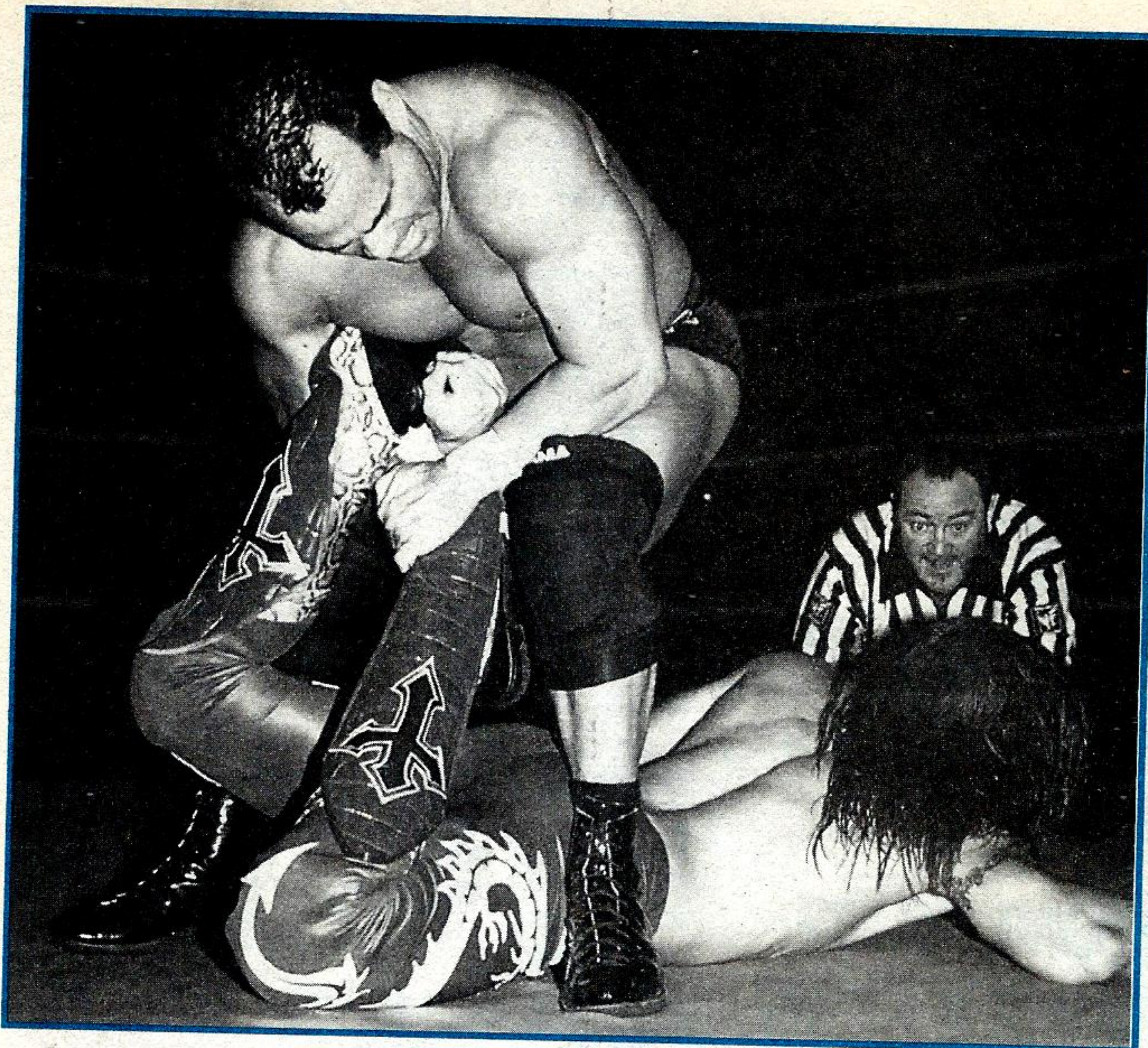
Why did they jump to the WWF?



Perry Saturn hasn't garnered the same high-profile victories as his stablemates, but beating on Jericho will open some eyes in the WWF. Like the other Radicals, all Saturn asks from the WWF is the chance to succeed.

Did they really have much choice? Good money and rapport with your colleagues are important, but all that can make wrestlers complacent and make them ignore the goals they have set for themselves.

"I have a lot of fond memories of where I was before, but only the



Malenko made the most of his first major opportunity in the WWF—a title match against then-light heavy-weight champ Essa Rios—by taking the belt in a decisive victory. Can the rest of The Radicals follow Malenko's lead?

WWF is willing to make the right investment in Malenko, Guerrero, Saturn, and me right now. That small investment will pay off divi-

dends for the WWF," said Benoit.

Confident words from one of the brash new kids on the block. With the WWF paying more dividends

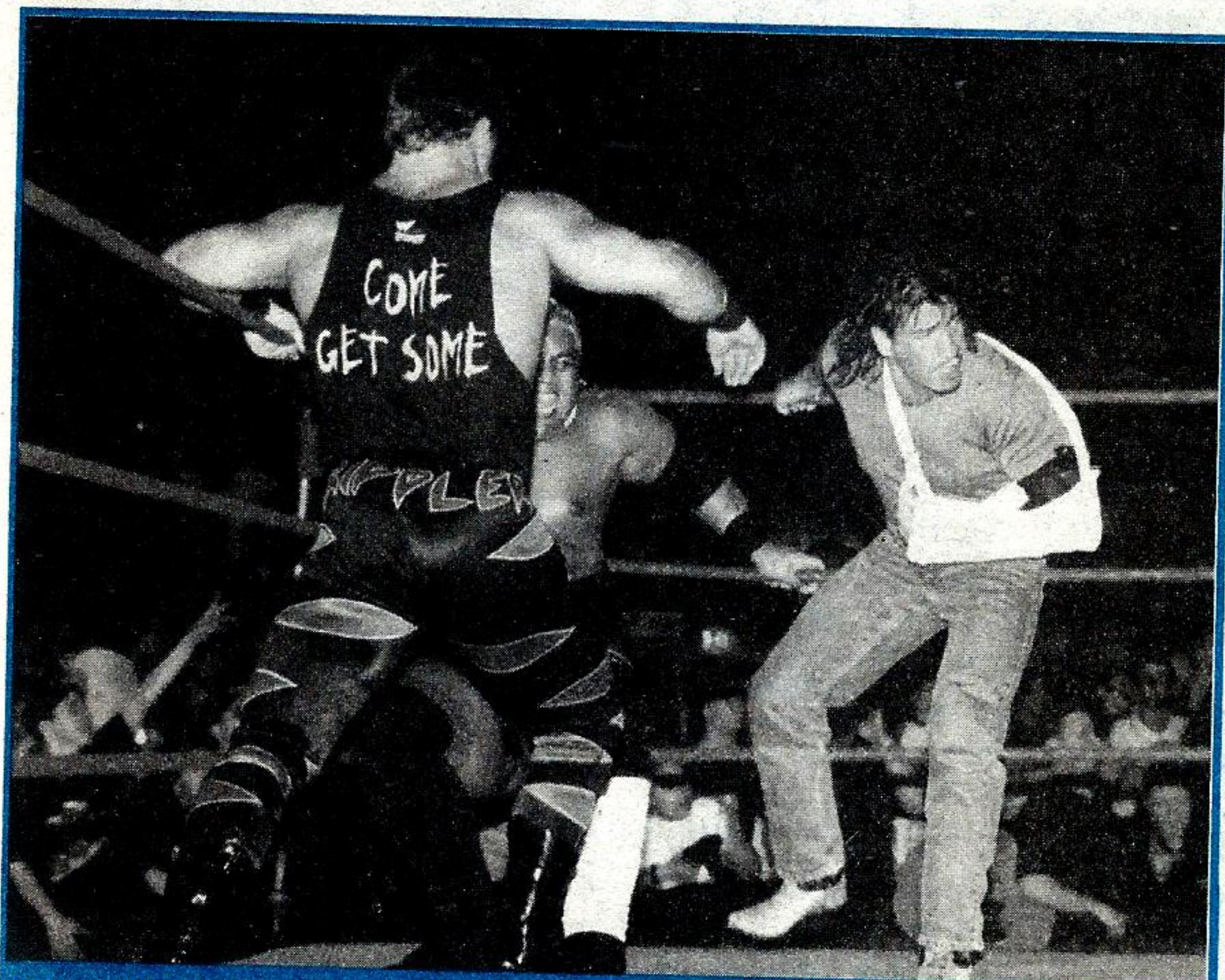
than ever to its investors, The Radicals must prove they belong in the same league as Triple-H, The Rock, The Big Show, Kane, and others. Bluntly put, The Radicals need the WWF a lot more than the WWF needs them.

"That's the case whenever someone new arrives," argued Eddy Guerrero. "They chanted, 'Rocky sucks!' at The Rock for the first year. They turned Steve Austin into 'The Ringmaster'. And I'm not even gonna start about The Undertaker. No offense to

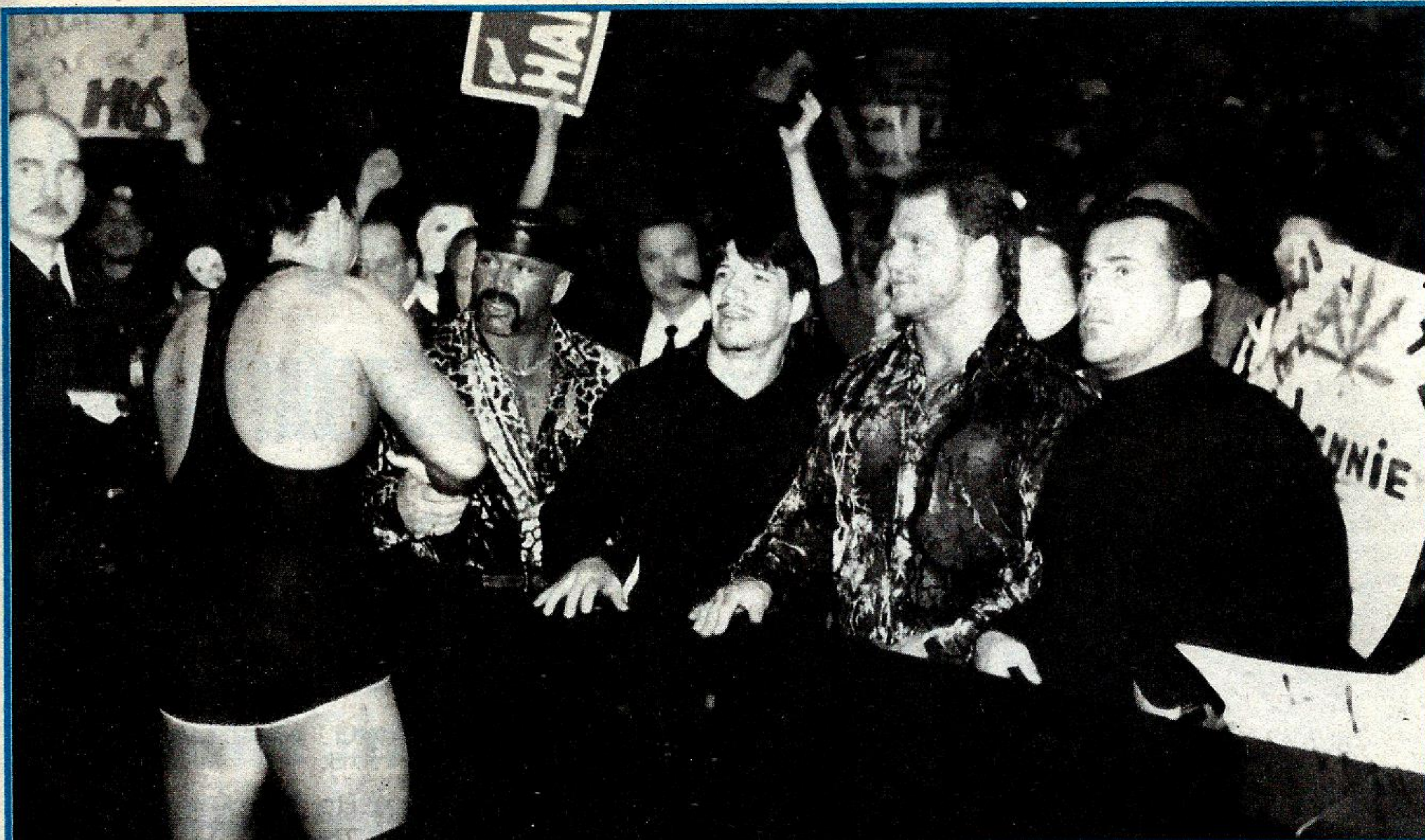
those guys, but The Radicals don't need any repackaging. I'm Eddy Guerrero. Chris Benoit is Chris Benoit. We're marketable names the WWF can bank on right away."

Or can they? WCW was afraid to let the success of a pay-per-view rest on the marketing potential of a Chris Benoit vs. Billy Kidman main event, for example. Or Dean Malenko vs. Rey Misterio Jr. Or Eddy Guerrero vs. Juventud Guerrera. At the same time, WCW never allowed The Radicals to gain a foothold in the top tier, refusing to match them in a pay-per-view against Hulk Hogan, Ric Flair, Bill Goldberg, or another major star that would give them main-event credibility.

Benoit finally received that opportunity at Mayhem when he wrestled Bret Hart in the finals of last year's WCW World title tournament. Despite losing that match, he bounced back and defeated Sid Vicious for the World title at Souled Out in January. He forfeited the championship the following



Even when he was injured, Eddy Guerrero remained a valuable asset to the group by interfering on behalf of Benoit, Malenko, and Saturn whenever they wrestled. As a result, his name remained on the tongues of the fans.



The Radicals arrived in the WWF amid much fanfare, but the commotion died down once Saturn, Guerrero, Benoit, and Malenko realized that they would get no slack from their WWF counterparts. They must earn their success in the WWF.

evening and made plans to enter the WWF.

Why would Benoit abandon WCW when he *finally* seemed to be getting everything he wanted? Clearly, Benoit lost faith in management and the philosophy behind WCW matchmaking and marketing. He was convinced his opportunities in WCW would be short-lived.

"Coming here was the best thing I could have ever done," said The Big Show, who left WCW (where he wrestled as The Giant) in January 1999. "That isn't a knock against anybody else, but it sometimes helps to change scenery and get a different outlook. When I became WWF champion at Survivor Series, I knew I could be successful in any promotion in the world—and that my earlier success wasn't a fluke."

Does he have any advice for The Radicals?

"Watch your back and turn it up a notch," he said. "If they thought they had to work hard before, that's nothing compared to what

they'll have to do now. They've gone from being relatively high in the food chain to being feeder fish at the bottom. Opportunities aren't just given out here. They're seized."

The Radicals have plenty of explaining to do if they don't succeed. A lack of opportunities, repressive management, and an underappreciation of their talent were their common complaints in the past. If they fail to succeed in the WWF, where even Duane Gill became a star, they'll be forced to look inward for the blame.

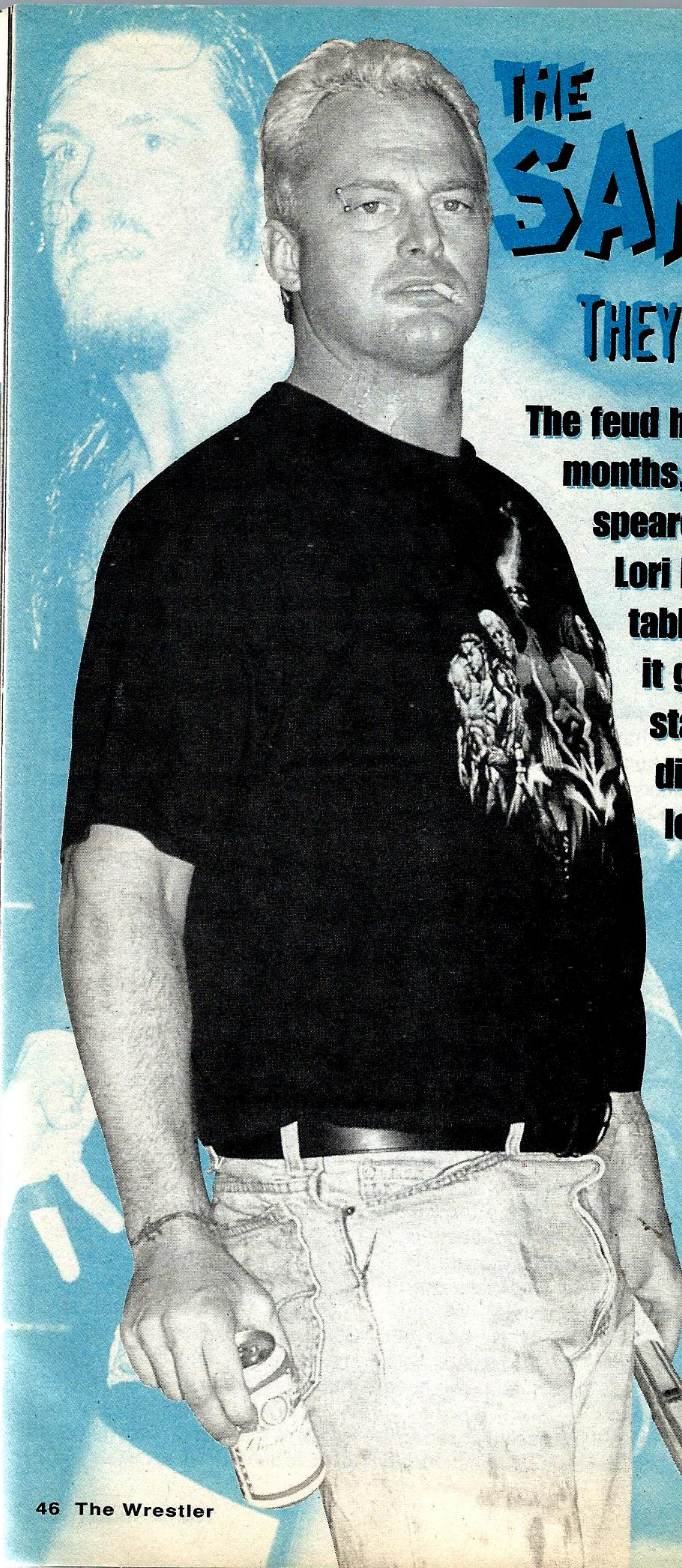
"No one has to worry about us failing in the WWF," said Benoit. "Wrestling is wrestling, no matter where you're competing. The WWF might have more sizzle and more mainstream exposure right now, but The Radicals aren't strangers to pressure. Whether you're at WrestleMania or in Stu Hart's Dungeon, the counter to a wristlock is the same. All we need is a chance."

What is the measure of success for The Radicals? Championship

gold for all members simultaneously or even within a few months is unrealistic. So is main-eventing at every PPV. When one or two members of The Radicals are mentioned in the same breath as Triple-H and The Rock, their success will be realized.

The Radicals are close to that standard already. Benoit defeated The Rock by countout before a television audience and nearly upset him in a cage match main event on *Raw*. Malenko is the WWF light heavyweight champion. Malenko and Saturn are closing in on World tag team champs The Dudley Boyz. Guerrero, who only recently returned to action after dislocating his elbow in his first WWF match, is showered with "Eddy sucks!" chants (that's actually a good sign) on a routine basis.

Benoit, Malenko, Saturn, and Guerrero do matter. They made an impact before they officially signed with the federation. Was their jump to the WWF the right move at the right time? It's up to The Radicals to prove it was. □



THE SANDMAN

THEY'RE SO DIFFERENT,

The feud had been brewing for months, but when Rhino speared The Sandman's wife, Lori Fullington, through a table at Living Dangerously, it got red-hot! As Sandman stares at his rival in disgust, isn't he really looking in the mirror?

By Harry Burkett

CATERING IS A big deal at rock concerts, Broadway plays, and big-time sporting events. Local restaurants and eateries compete for the honor of providing dinners for famous people who roll into town. It's great press for the restaurant and free food for celebrity guests.

Only ECW would attract (and accept) the culinary contributions of Schloski's Bar & Grill. On this evening, wrestlers and ECW employees milled around the table sampling cold cuts, cheese steaks, and, for the fitness-conscious, some lean turkey sandwiches. Schloski's head server, a woman named Beth, left the table to make two personalized deliveries. In one hand, she held a 20-ounce egg/tomato juice/hot sauce mixture. In

RHINO:

THEY'RE IDENTICAL!

the other, she carried a six-pack of Budweiser.

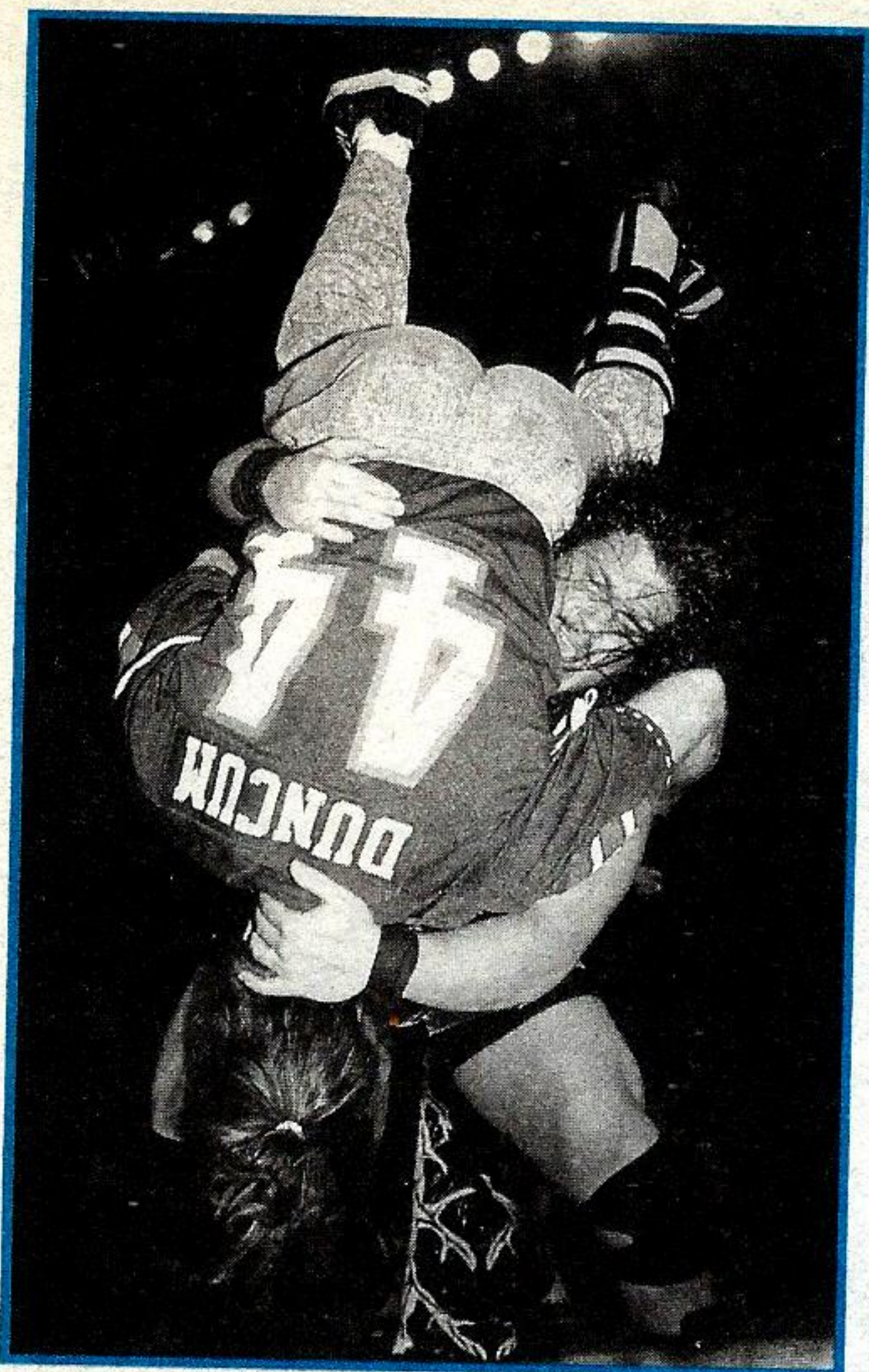
Egg, tomato juice, and hot sauce? What kind of health freak would drink that? Rob Van Dam? Jerry Lynn? Must be Lance Storm. After much prompting, the woman responded that it was for Rhino. The six-pack of beer? That was a no-brainer. That was for The Sandman.

The Sandman is wrestling's original beer-guzzling bad boy. Steve Austin took that anti-hero image to a higher level and made "Steveweiser" a household word, but Sandman was the originator. Even Austin would admit that.

Since Sandman has a reputation for being a heavy drinker, most assume he's a bar-hopping partier. Not true. Sandman's a loner. He doesn't drink beer to be popular. He begins with a brewski during his noon breakfast and finishes with one during his midnight dinner.

In fact, The Sandman shuns the company of other wrestlers. He chooses to stay in his hotel room until bell time and, even then, chooses a remote portion of the locker room in which to hide out. Depending on the facility, he might even be lucky enough to receive private accommodations. When school is not in session, he brings along his wife, Lori Fullington, and his kids. The Sandman cherishes this quality time with his family. Having a wife and children nearby must be fulfilling for any traveling wrestler.





Rhino's unabashed attitude regarding dispensing pain to whomever gets in his path (here he plants already-injured Rob Van Dam with a bodyslam) is a lot like The Sandman's. They'll both kick your tail in, injured or not.

That's why Sandman is so angry at Rhino. It was the 285-pound monster who speared Lori Fullington through a table. That senseless act drove The Sandman bonkers.

"I hate that no-good piece of [dirt]," said The Sandman. "I don't care if Rhino wants to smash me with my own Singapore cane, throw me off a balcony, or spear me straight to hell. I can handle that. But my family is out of bounds. Lori never did anything to deserve being speared through a table. What's next? Is he going spear my boy?"

The Sandman's valiant defense of his family is heartwarming. But, with all due respect to Sandman, Lori Fullington is no angel, and neither, for that matter, is young Tyler. It was only a few years ago when Lori betrayed Sandman and joined Raven ... and Tyler beat his own father with a Singapore cane. Never confuse the Fullingtons with the Brady Bunch.

Since when does The Sandman



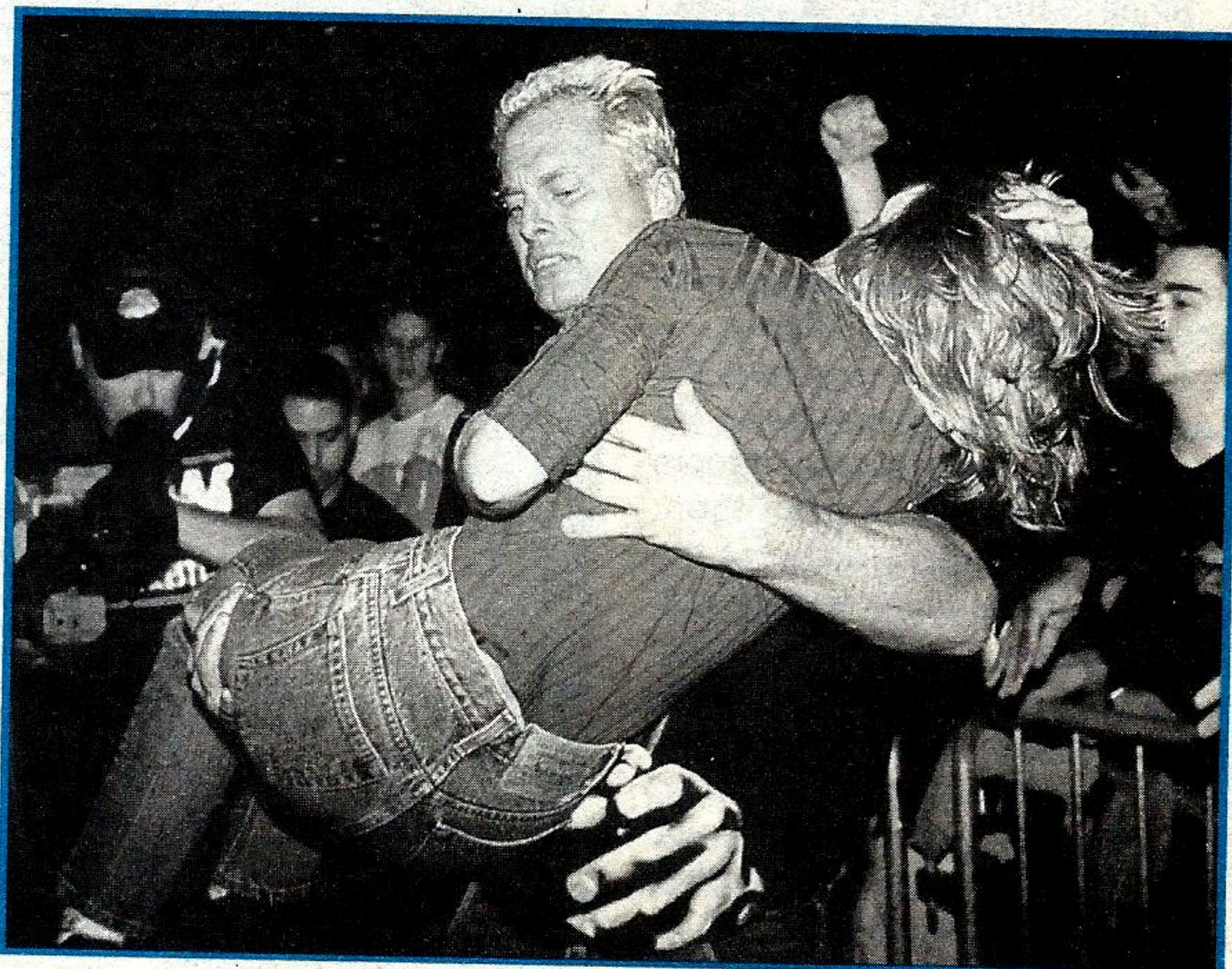
The Sandman was a hardcore icon long before Angel ever came on the scene. Now that Sandman is a veteran of the ECW wars and no longer a hungry neophyte, he's found men similar to him in years past not to his liking.

set boundaries? The Sandman was told not to swear on TV programs. He was told not to drink beer in public arenas. He was told to stop using the Singapore cane.

The Sandman rebelled against those accepted norms of society and, as a result, developed a cult following for himself and ECW. The Sandman would

drink whenever he wanted and cane whomever he wanted. He became popular because he didn't care about being popular.

Neither does Rhino. No, he doesn't drink a lot of beer, he doesn't use a cane, and he hasn't competed in many specialty matches. But he'll spear whomever he wants, whether Steve Corino likes it, Paul Heyman likes



The Sandman carried his wife, Lori Fullington, out of the arena after she was speared by Rhino. Sandman says that with his actions, Rhino crossed a boundary. Sandman setting boundaries? Who ever thought we'd see the day?

it, or The Sandman likes it.

His list of victims is quite diverse. Sandman, Raven, Tommy Dreamer, and Justin Credible all have been floored by Rhino's spear. To Rhino, Lori Fullington was just another victim.

"I'm sick of Sandman crying, boo-hooing, and moaning," said Rhino's manager, Steve Corino. "Lori Fullington is a bimbo, and everybody knows it. Sandman must have dragged a dollar through a trailer park to find her. Sandman brags about being hardcore, but he whines like a baby when Rhino gets rough. If Lori Fullington doesn't want to be speared through tables,

she ought to keep her [butt] at home."

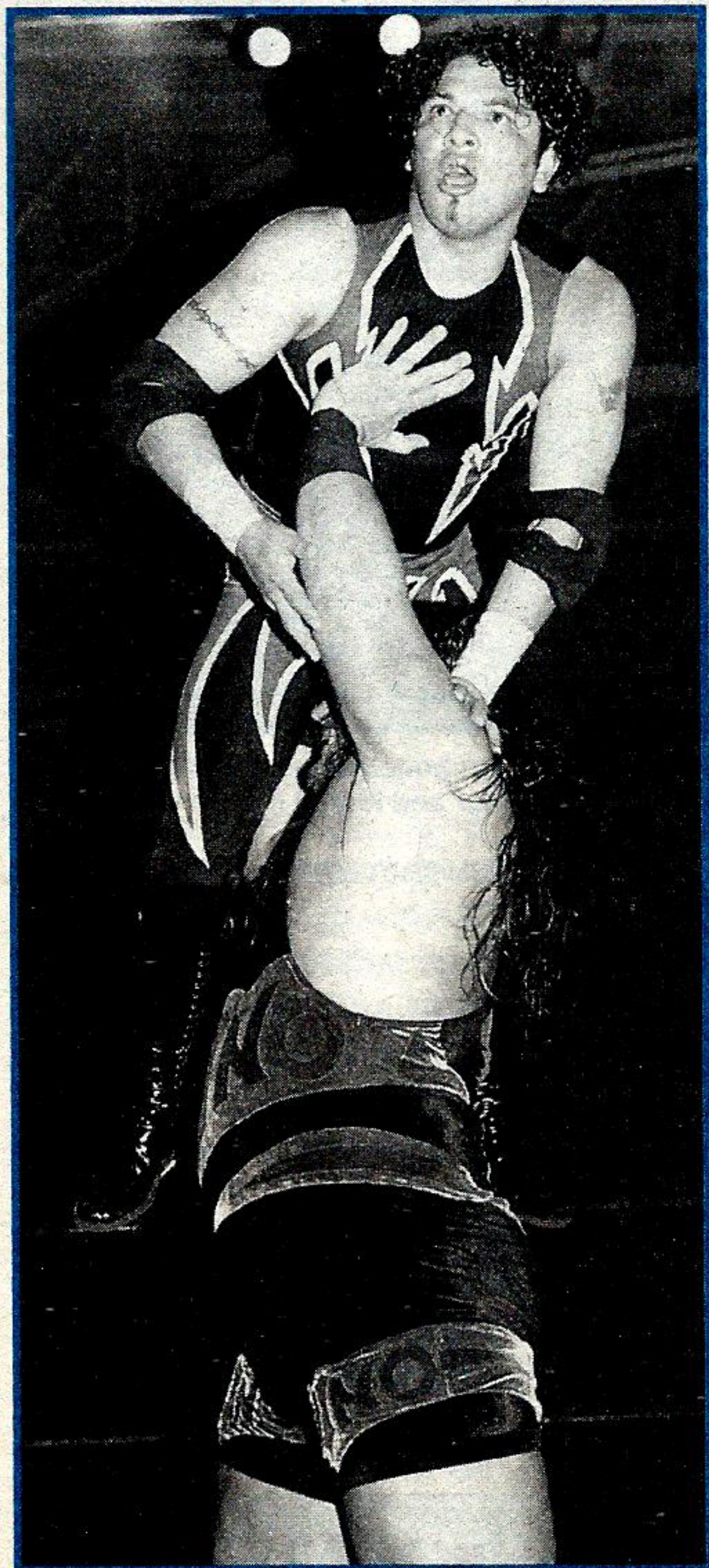
What does "hardcore" mean, anyway? It means doing anything necessary to accomplish the task at hand. If a suplex isn't good enough to beat an opponent, use a frying pan to the head. When a chair shot doesn't get the job done, a power bomb through a flaming table might.

If you can't get The Sandman's attention with idle threats, try spearing his wife through a table.

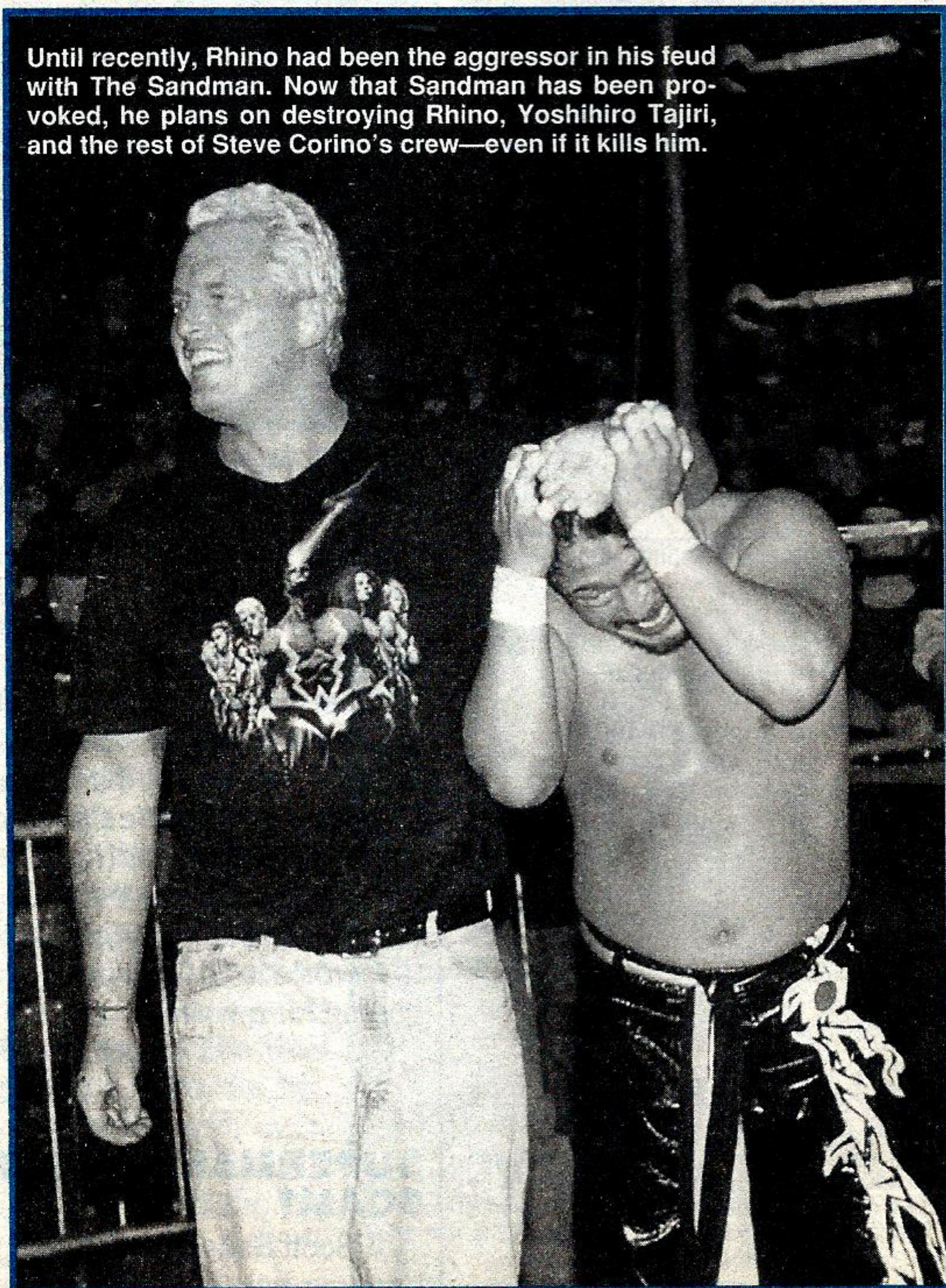
"Rhino is playing by Sandman's rules, and Sandman doesn't like it," said Corino. "Who said Sandman has a right to cane me? Who said Sandman has a right to swig beer in front of impressionable young fans? Well, I ask you, who said Rhino does *not* have a right to spear loose Lori through a table?!"

Whether Sandman agrees with Corino's analysis is of no consequence. The fact is, fans pay to see Sandman curse in his promos, cane his opponents, and bust open beer cans on his forehead. In 2000, those same fans will pay to see Rhino spear Lori Fullington through a table. Rhino is simply following Sandman's example by creating a buzz with coarse, over-the-top behavior. Both men are perfect for ECW, and The Sandman might hate Rhino because they're so much alike.

The party continued around the caterer's table as The Sandman and Rhino remained in their dressing rooms. The Sandman drank his beer as Rhino gulped down his egg, tomato juice, and hot sauce shake. Each man remained alone. Anti-heroes are never part of the crowd. □



Did Rhino (pressing Super Crazy) spear Sandman's wife because he wanted an easy road to the finals of the ECW TV title tournament? It's hard to believe that wasn't his motivation, but he probably had more than one purpose.



Until recently, Rhino had been the aggressor in his feud with The Sandman. Now that Sandman has been provoked, he plans on destroying Rhino, Yoshihiro Tajiri, and the rest of Steve Corino's crew—even if it kills him.

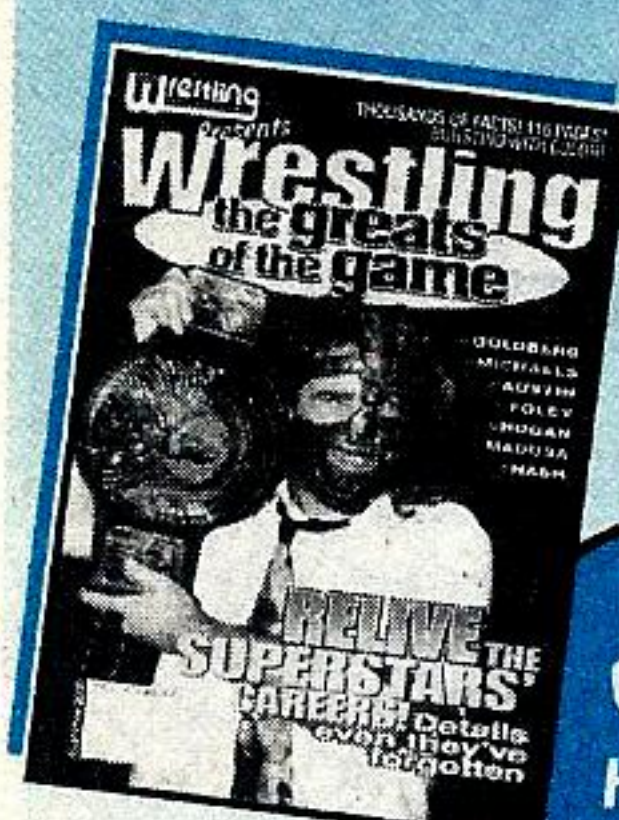
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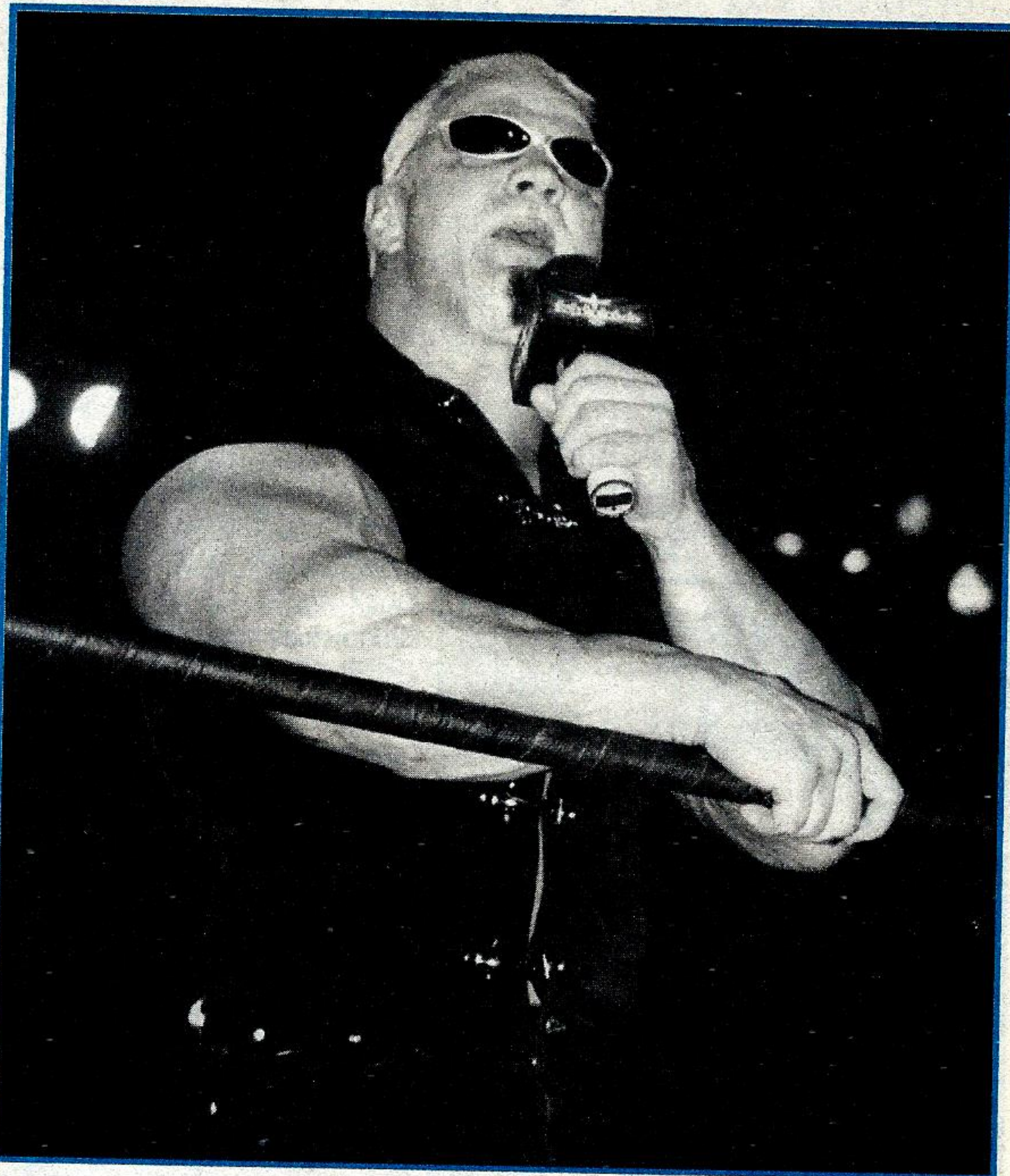
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YOUR LETTERS

(Continued from page 5)



To WCW, Scott Steiner is as dangerous on the microphone as he is in the ring. His outrageousness has made him one of the most popular and feared men in wrestling.

wrong magazine, I strongly urge you guys to consider Mike Awesome for this year's number-one spot in the "PWI 500."

Everything this man does is impressive, not to mention successful, and I can't think of another wrestler who defeats his opponents as convincingly. Mike Awesome defends the belt more frequently than any champion in the world and was also a dual champ for a while.

RICHEL GARVEY
Oxford, OH

SUPERMAN OR SUPER SCAM?

If Scott Steiner isn't the biggest, baddest bad guy in the sport to-

day, can someone please tell me who is?

TODD MALTBY
Fircrest, WA

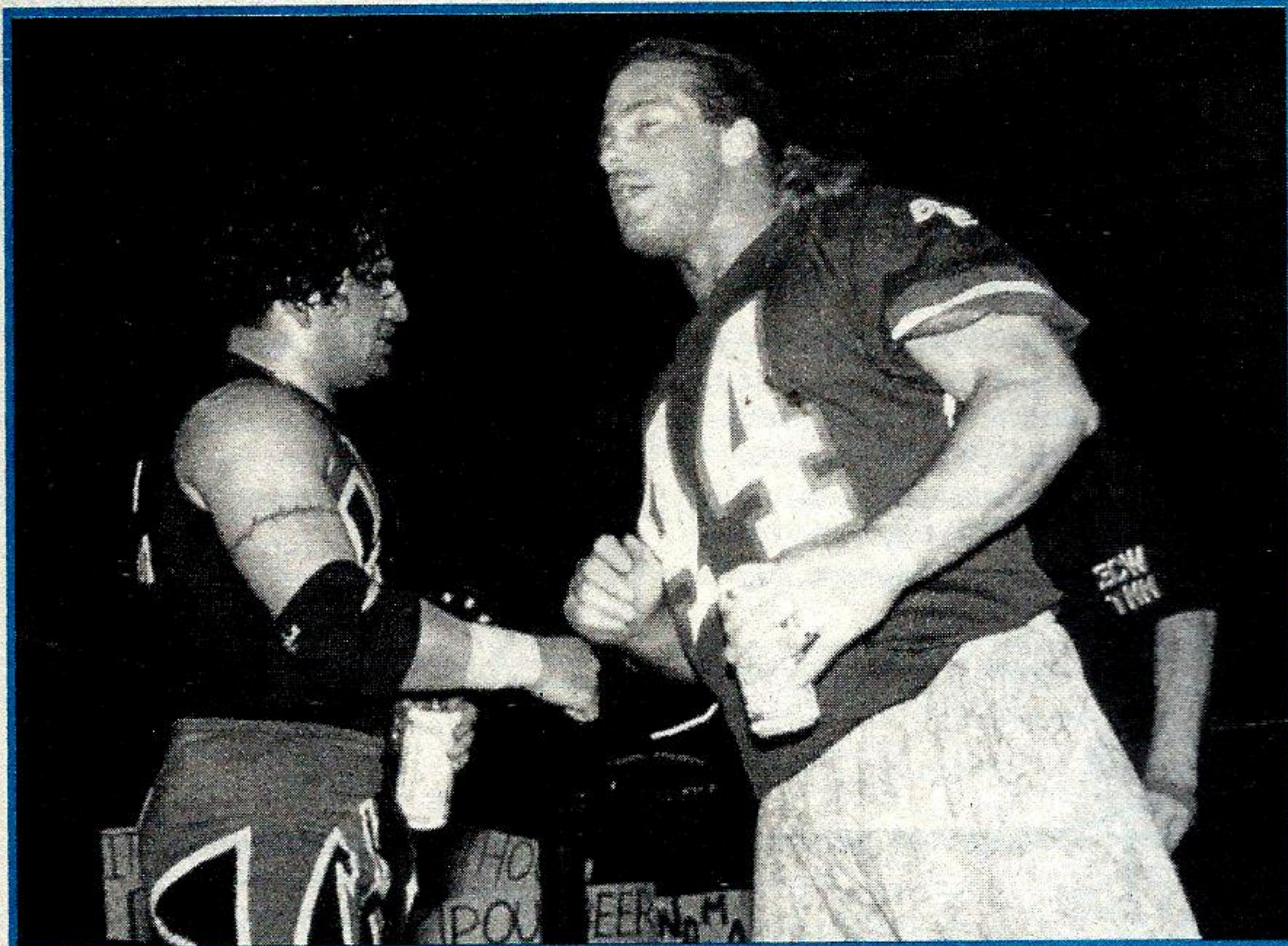
"Big Poppa Pump" is a loose cannon, and WCW should have kept him suspended. How can you put someone on live TV when you don't know what he's going to say or do next?

STEPHEN McALLISTER
Schoharie, NY ☐

Send **YOUR LETTERS** to:
Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034
Or e-mail letters to:
yourletters@aol.com

WHAT'S HAPPENING

(Continued from page 7)



ECW TV champ Super Crazy and former champ Rob Van Dam may be sharing a beer now, but expect that to change once RVD is healthy enough to make a run at the belt. Don't be surprised if Jerry Lynn makes it a three-way feud.

Though Michaels has been absent from WWF TV for a while, last I heard, he still held that office. I wonder if Michaels should be sending out resumes.

ECW TV champ **Super Crazy** is getting a little tired of being compared to former champ **Rob Van Dam**. While RVD and Crazy get along fine right now, "The Insane Luchadore" is holding the very title Van Dam vowed to win back when he abandoned the belt due to a leg injury in March. The fact that so many ECW insiders are judging Crazy's tenure by Van Dam's 22-month reign has the Luchadore hot.

Jerry Lynn, who has wrestled against and with both men at times, says a war between these two has Feud of the Year written all over it.

"You're talking about two of the most gifted and intense men in the sport," Lynn said. "As far as who would dominate, I know Van Dam has his eyes set on the World title, so he could be had. Then again, Crazy doesn't have the big match

experience that Rob does. I don't know. Maybe I'll have to beat them both."

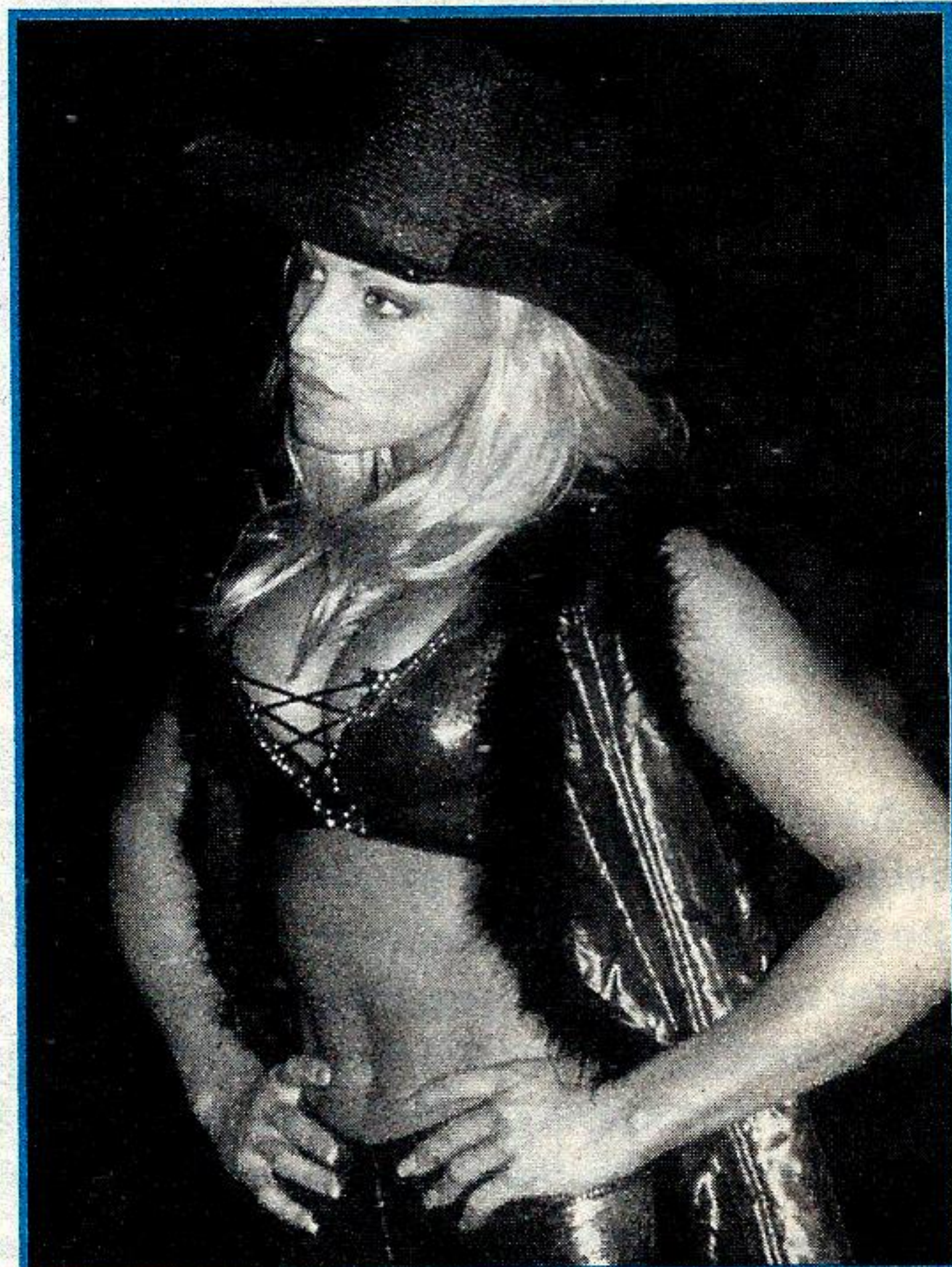
Ron Reese has returned to the States after a tour of Japan and is demanding a shot at the NWA title. However, there may be a big obstacle in Reese's way; **Abdullah the Butcher** is rumored to be on his way to NWA Georgia to challenge Reese. This battle of behemoths is an independent promoter's dream.

Hulk Hogan has seen it happen countless times: A big, tough rulebreaker steamrolls over the competition and demands a match against the "Hulkster." When Hogan connected with the big foot and went for the legdrop on **The Wall** on a recent *Nitro*, he figured that battle was over. Nobody—including Hogan—expected the big man to kick out. But by standing right up after

Hogan's legdrop, **The Wall** sent a message to the entire promotion. Hogan read it loud and clear, but did **Bill Goldberg**? With "Da Man" eager to get a shot at reclaiming the WCW title, and **The Wall** looking to establish himself as a legitimate title contender, a showdown between these two monsters seems imminent.

"But Can She Be A Good Manager, Part II." Okay, so **T & A** is a cute name, but what does **Trish Stratus** hope to accomplish by getting **Albert** and **Test** to team? And why hasn't Test ever gone after Triple-H for stealing his fiancée, **Stephanie McMahon**? And how does Albert feel about **Big Bossman's** new partnership with **Bull Buchanan**? Well, if nothing else, Stratus has managed to convince Albert to wear a T-shirt in the ring. That's certainly a step in the right direction.

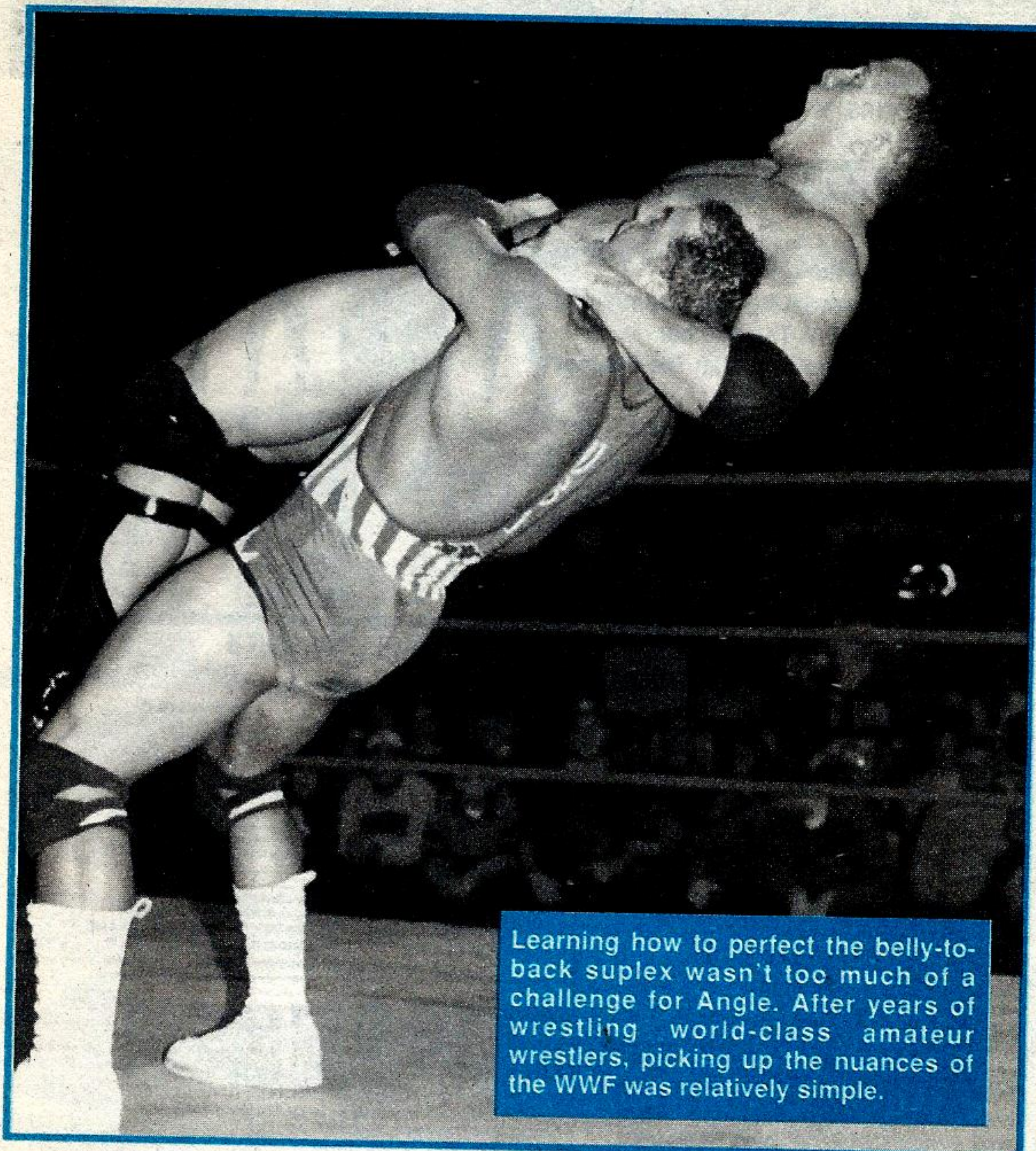
That's what's happening. Catch ya in 30. □



Although she hasn't done much in the WWF yet, sexy Trish Stratus has helped the fans notice Test and Albert. She even has Albert covering that hairy back of his with a T-shirt.

NO HOLDS BARRED

(Continued from page 8)



Learning how to perfect the belly-to-back suplex wasn't too much of a challenge for Angle. After years of wrestling world-class amateur wrestlers, picking up the nuances of the WWF was relatively simple.

member of the World Series champion New York Yankees.

"Kurt," I said, shoving his arm a little. Finally, I had his attention.

"Take a look at that glove, Will. That's history. That glove probably still has stains from Yogi's sweaty hand and dirt from Yankee Stadium all encrusted in it. One day, Will, you're going to see one of my singlets hanging on the walls of this establishment. It's true."

I decided to challenge him immediately. "Kurt, that's never going to happen. Not with the way you've been acting lately. Maybe if you had retired from wrestling immediately following your gold medal win, but not now. You're too, *um*, tainted."

As soon as the words left my mouth, I wanted to take them back.

"Tainted? What do you mean

I'm tainted?" Angle screamed into my ear. "I'll have you know that I'm your Olympic champion and his Olympic champion and her Olympic champion. It's true." Angle was wildly pointing at people sitting all around us. "Just watch, Will, see this old guy sitting a few stools down from us—he'll know me by sight."

"Hey, old-timer," Angle said as he approached the gentleman. "Do you know who I am?"

"No, can't say that I do," the man replied while he eyed Angle cautiously.

"Here, I'll give you a clue." Angle suddenly looked worried. "I'm a former Olympic wrestler—a former gold medal Olympic wrestler. Does that help?"

"Yeah, yeah, I think it does," the man replied. Angle immediately

stood a little straighter and shot me a look that said, "I told you so." Then the man continued, "You're that Bruce Baumgartner guy. Pleased to meet you, Mr. Baumgartner. I gotta say, you wrestlers, you keep in great shape. Look at how good you look for your age."

Right then, I just about fell out of my seat with laughter. Bruce Baumgartner was a gold medalist in the 1984 Olympic Games and a silver medalist in the 1988 Games, and he never competed in the WWF, but that's who this poor old man thought Angle was.

When Kurt sat back down, I didn't say anything. He had already been embarrassed enough in my estimation. I just offered him a beer, and for the next hour or so, we chatted the small talk that people chat when they're uncomfortable with each other. We talked about our favorite sports teams, our favorite athletes, but stayed away from wrestling.

As I watched Kurt walk out of the restaurant that day, I couldn't help but think that he still could become Wheaties' next Bruce Jenner. Later that night, however, I went to the Garden to watch him wrestle. He was back to being his old self and had apparently forgotten the "Baumgartner Incident," as I now call it.

As he wrestled (and cheated, I might add), I was tempted to make a sign with another important Olympic maxim on it, the Olympic Creed: "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph, but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered, but to have fought well."

After considering it, though, I figured, why bother? It was pretty apparent that Kurt had already forgotten those lines, too. □

YOU ASKED US

(Continued from page 16)

the guys in the ring. Keep dreamin'—and have another Twinkie."

...

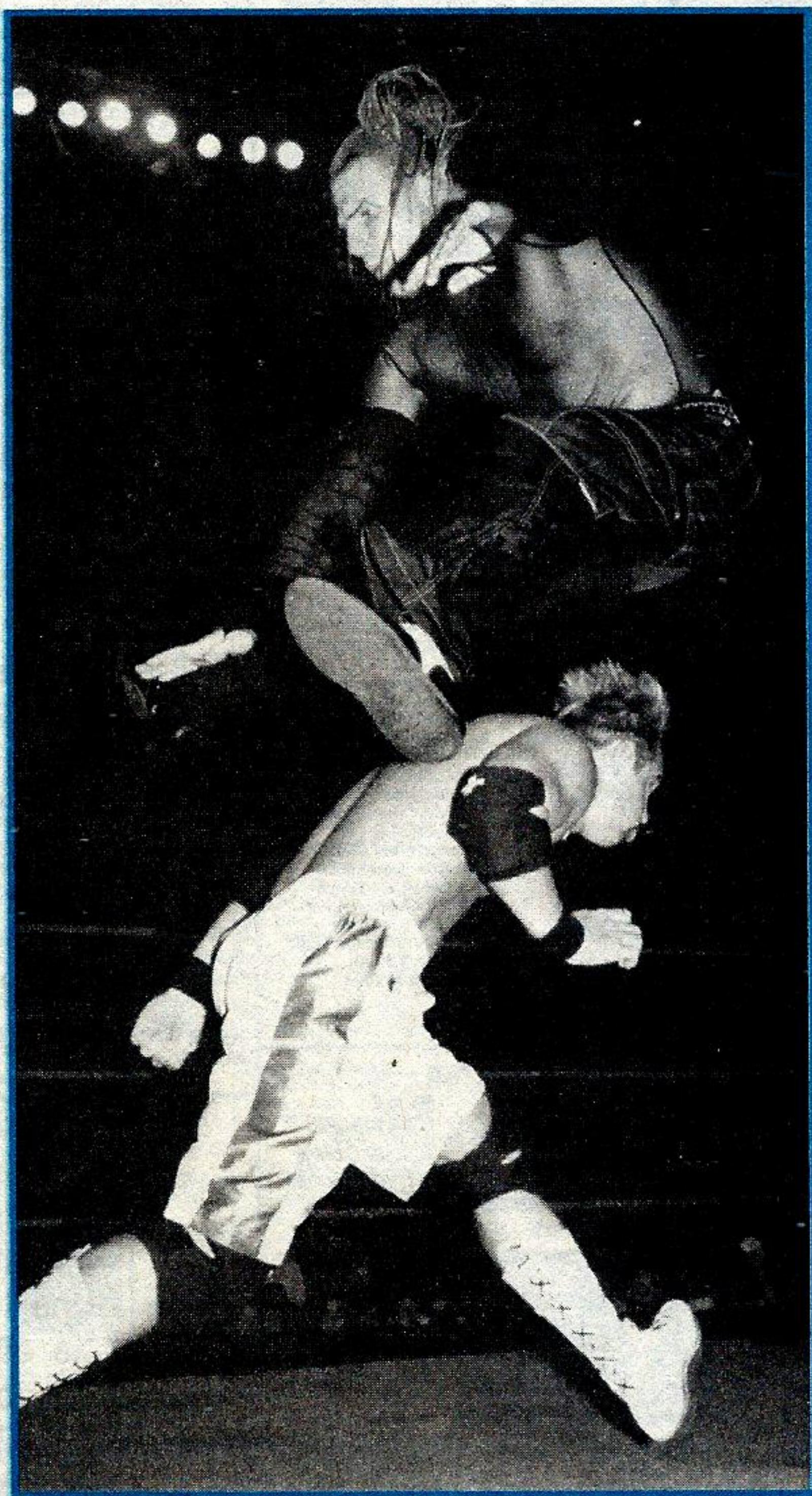
Q: "This question is for Paul Heyman. Paul, when TNN and Cyrus forced you to strip Rob Van Dam of the TV title because of his injuries, you had to be feeling pretty hot. After looking at Living Dangerously, a pay-per-view that saw a new TV champion crowned in the form of Super Crazy, do you think everything turned out for the best, or would you still have Van Dam as your TV champ?"—Steve Ash, Columbus, GA

A: "That's a good question, Steve," said Heyman. "Right now, it's a hard question to answer. I'm a firm believer that the only way a champion should lose his belt is in the ring. I don't believe in stripping people of titles because of injuries, unless the injury is going to keep the man out for a long time, which wasn't the case with Van Dam. Of course, winning the TV title elevated Super Crazy and made him a legitimate main-event star. So, again, it's a tough question to answer, but I still don't feel right about taking the belt off Rob. He deserved to lose it

in the ring. And I especially didn't like being forced to do it."

...

Q: "I have a question for Jeff Hardy. Jeff, when Matt was out injured, you had to enter into singles matches in order to keep your name on fans' lips, and you performed very well in those matches. Lately, since the return of Matt, there have been rumors that you're not happy being a member of The Hardy Boyz. Is that true, and do you plan on leaving the team?"—Juan Flores, Bluewater, NM



When Jeff Hardy (leapfrogging Scotty Too Hotty) has wrestled in singles matches, he's looked impressive. Don't expect him to leave his brother and become a full-time singles star, however.

A: "Juan, I've heard those rumors, too," replied Hardy, "and I can honestly say that I have no plans of leaving The Hardy Boyz or Matt. I mean, we've been together since we started in this business, and he's the one guy I know I can always depend on. There's nothing like having a brother by your side, and I'm sure both The Dudley Boyz would say the same thing, although I could really care less about those goons. As far as my singles career, I might take a singles match now and then, but that's all it will be—now and then. After all, I want to become a two-time WWF World tag team champ with Matt." □

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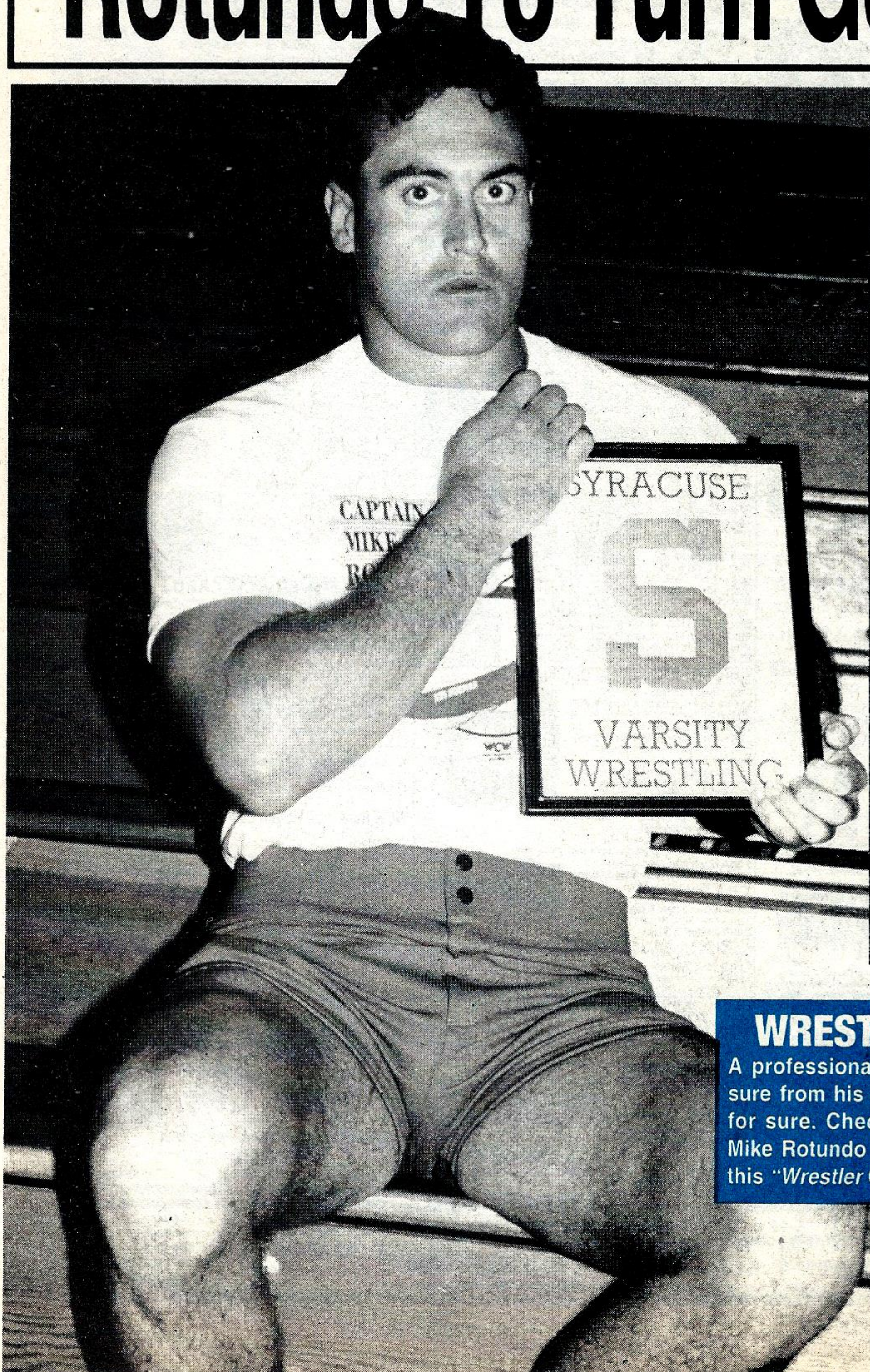
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Syracuse U. Forces Mike Rotundo To Turn Good:



**“THEY
WERE
GOING
TO
TAKE
AWAY
MY
LETTER”**

WRESTLER CLASSIC!

A professional wrestler bowing to pressure from his alma mater? Strange story for sure. Check out the troubles facing Mike Rotundo a decade ago as you read this “Wrestler Classic” from August 1990!

Mike Rotundo is a proud man: proud of his accomplishments, his ability, and his collegiate career. So when Rotundo realized he was embarrassing his alma mater, he knew it was time for a change

By Bob Smith

A TOP A HILL in central New York state, in the city of Syracuse, sits the shrine. Bold, sprawling, a part of Syracuse's skyline and lifeline, Syracuse University is an important part of the cultural and sporting world of upstate New Yorkers.

They are Orange proud—Syracuse orange, that is. They pack the Carrier Dome for Syracuse University basketball and football games. They swarm into Manley Field for lacrosse games. And they pack Manley Fieldhouse for wrestling ... collegiate wrestling.

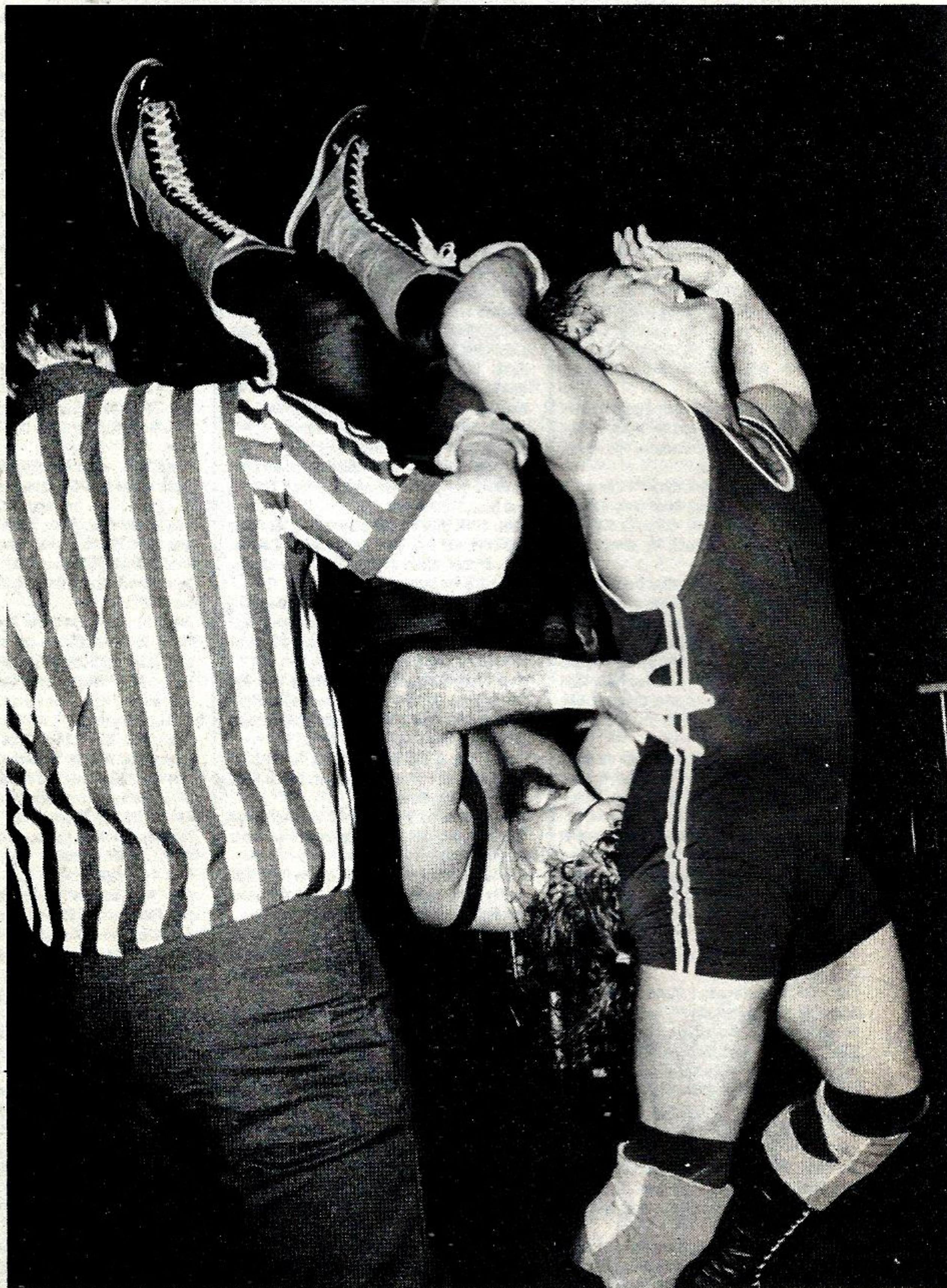
They are proud of their athletes and treat them with respect, even after their SU athletic careers have ended. But when an athlete tarnishes the University's reputation, he must be held liable.

Mike Rotundo knows this all-too-well.

"After I turned rulebreaker, I'd get letters all the time," said Rotundo, one of the greatest wrestlers in SU's history. "Friends from school, SU fans with kids who watched me on television. After a while, it became impossible to take. I tried to ignore it. I tried to let these people know that I had to live my own life. But it became obvious that a Syracuse University athlete doesn't have his own life. He belongs to the school.

"They threatened to take away my letter, and I just couldn't let that happen."

Rotundo was quiet for a few minutes, and he seemed to be considering the consequences of having his collegiate life erased in such a sweeping fashion.



Mike Rotundo backdrops Cactus Jack. When Rotundo realized that his rulebreaking tactics were becoming an embarrassment to Syracuse University, he changed his ways.

"Don't misunderstand me, those are the greatest sports fans in the world," he added. "You see, there really isn't much to do up in Syracuse, and it snows a lot during the winter, so they really take the school teams to heart. It's a college

town. And the athletes are treated like pro athletes would be treated in New York or Boston or Chicago. That's just the way it is.

"When they graduate, they aren't forgotten. These people don't root

(Continued on page 62)

MIKE ROTUNDO

(Continued from page 59)

for professional sports teams. They root for *players*. As for me, well, I went further than any other SU wrestler in history. No other SU wrestler had ever won a world tag team title, and I did it twice. These people were proud of me. But when I changed my ways, well, they got very angry.

"I never got a letter from the university president or athletic director or anything official like that," Rotundo continued. "The letters came from alumni, from fans, from the people of Syracuse. I got one letter from a graduate who now lives in Atlanta. He said he was embarrassed to go to wrestling matches and see the way I acted.

"I've always tried to live my own life, but I also try to care about people. I embarrassed these people who supported me all those years, and that just wasn't right. And, as I said, they were going to petition the University to take away my varsity letter. That letter is something I'm very proud of."

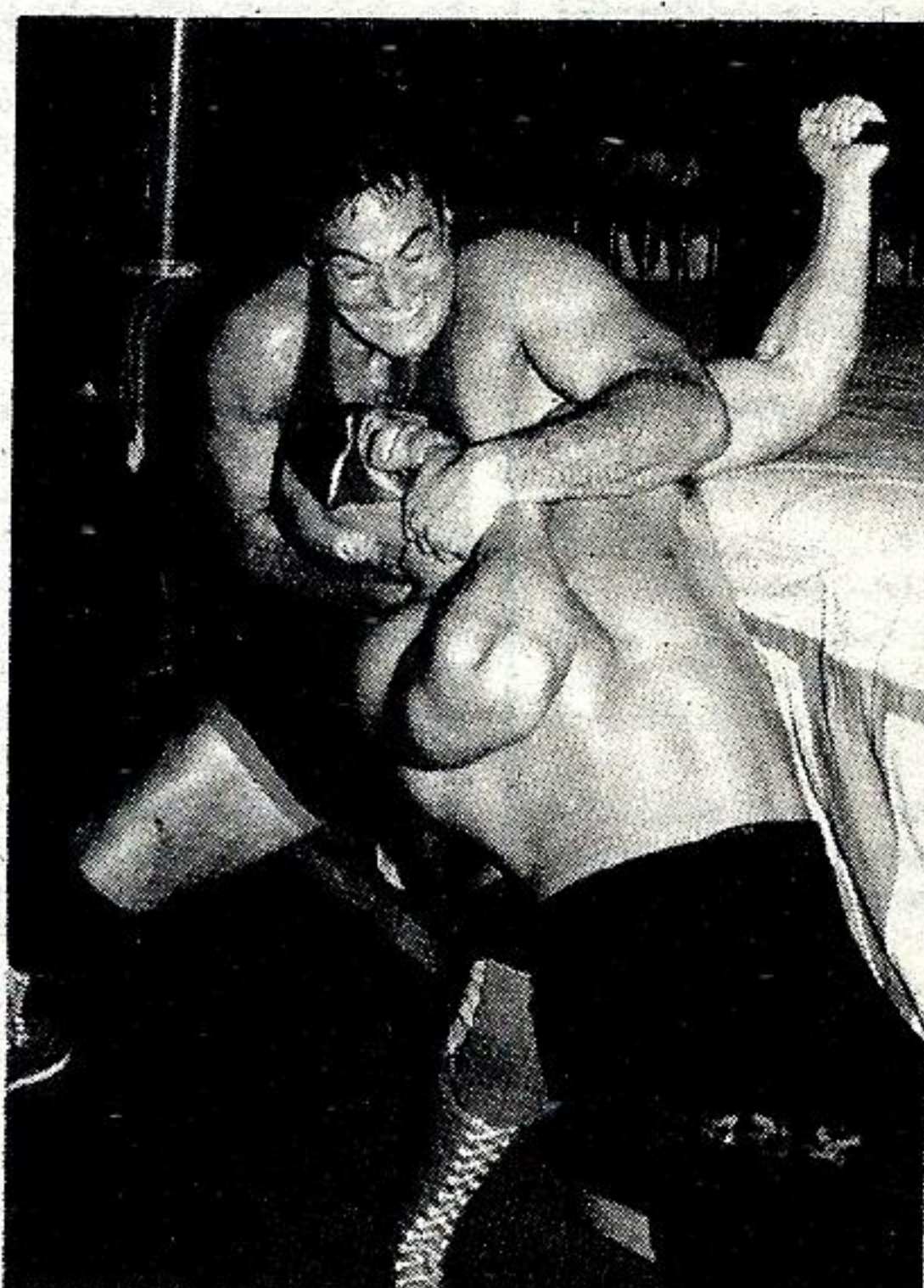
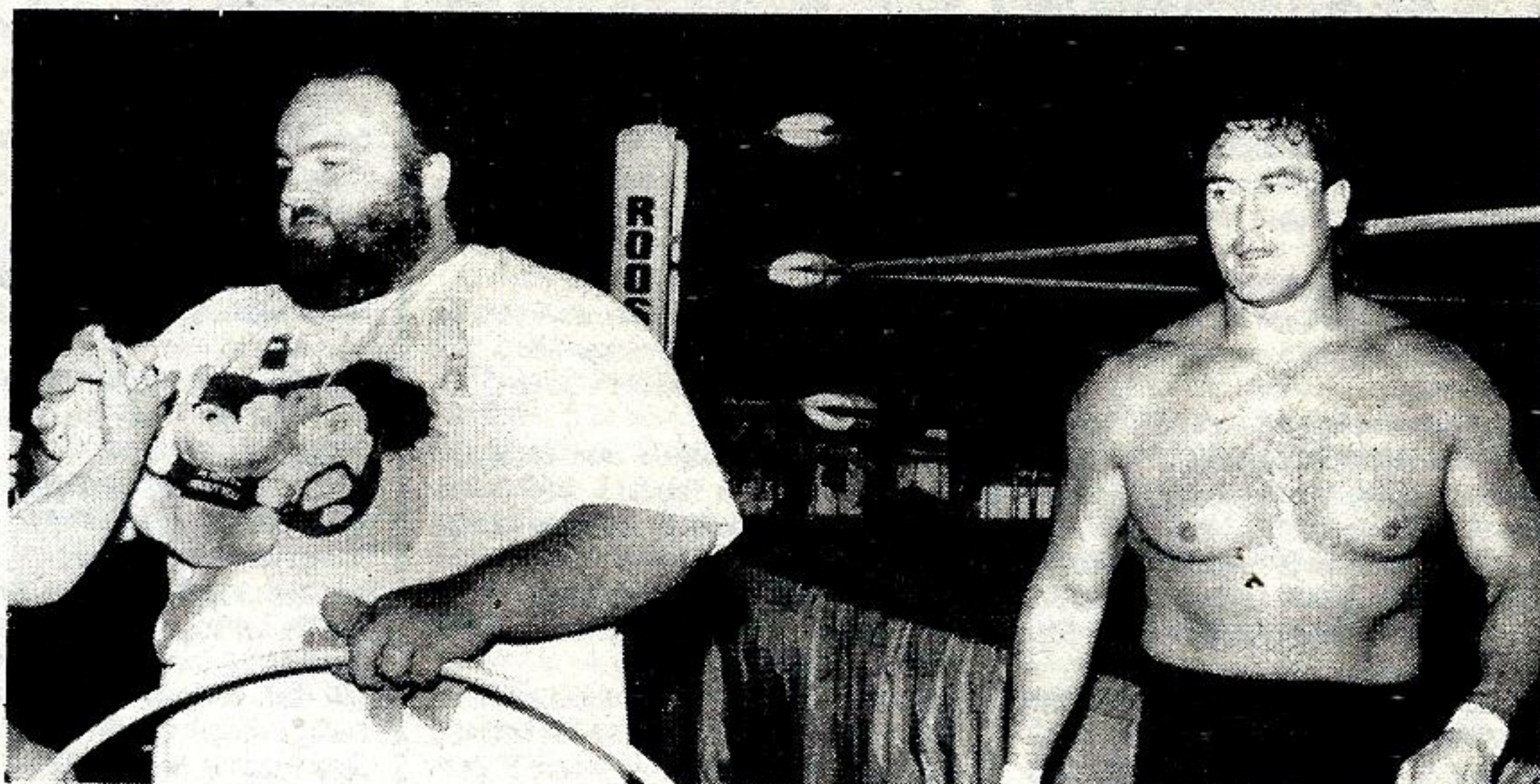
His pride showed for years. When Rotundo and Rick Steiner, a Michigan graduate, formed The Varsity Club under Kevin Sullivan, they both wore their varsity jackets to the ring.

"In many ways," Rick Steiner says, "a college athlete stays in college forever."

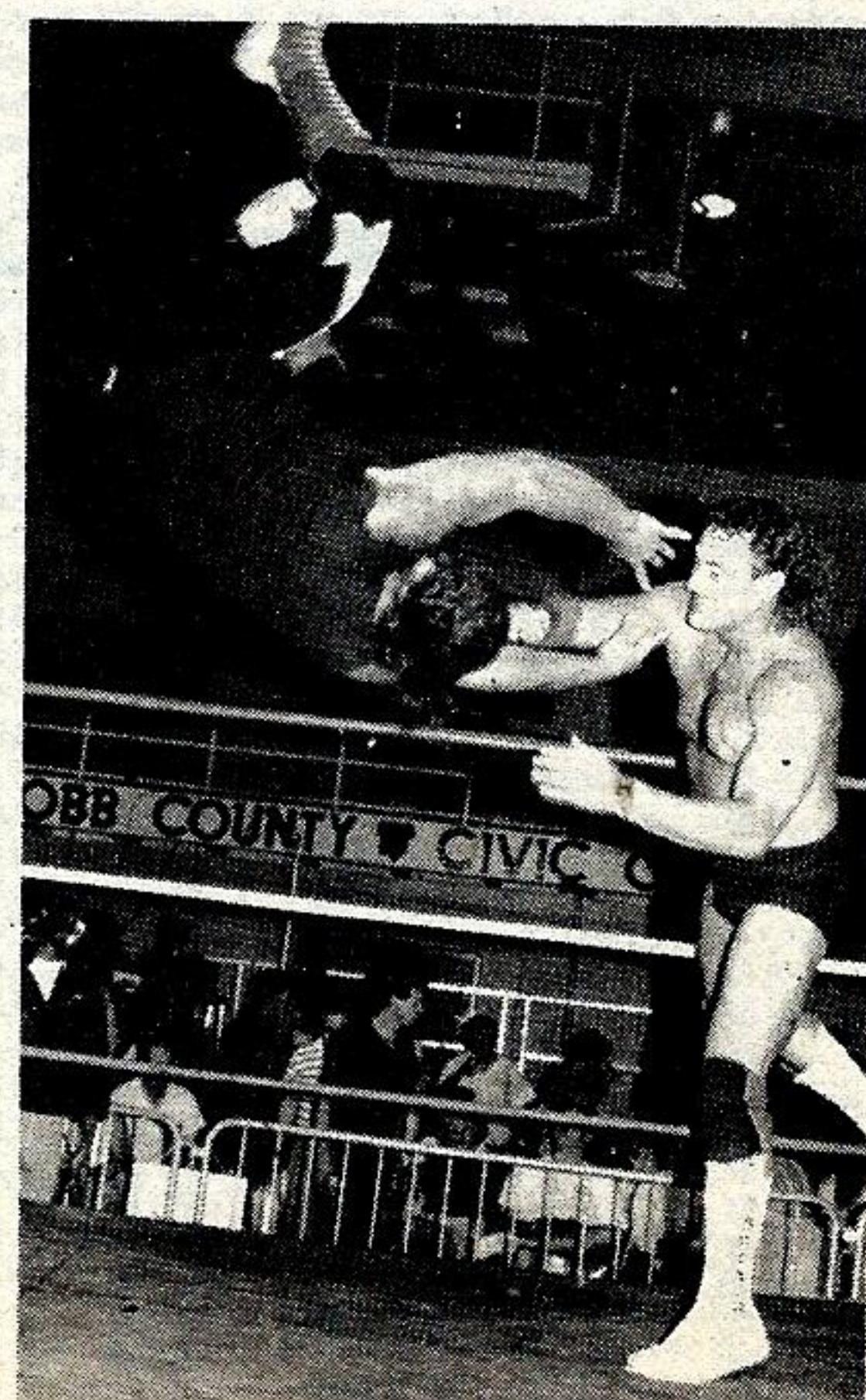
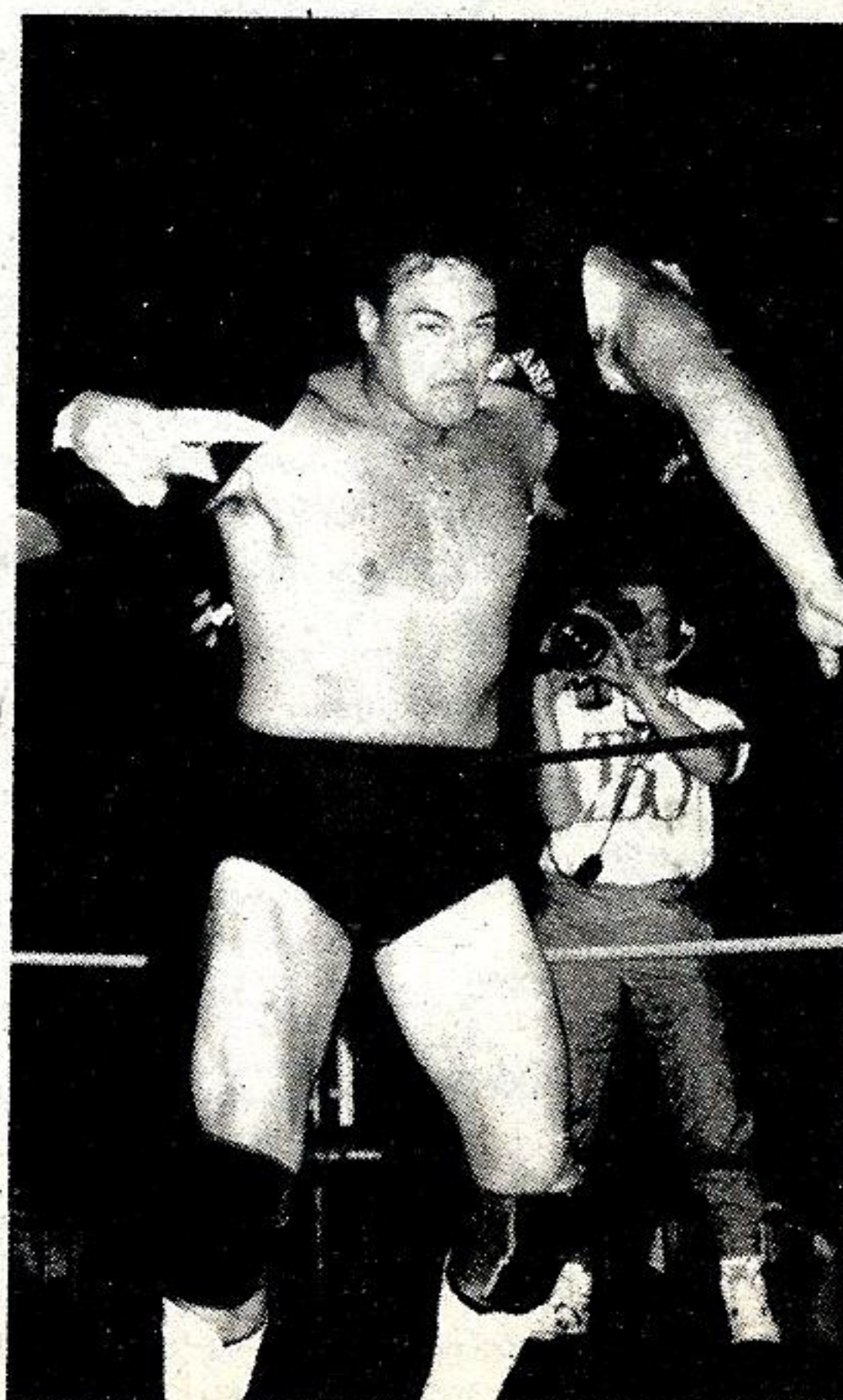
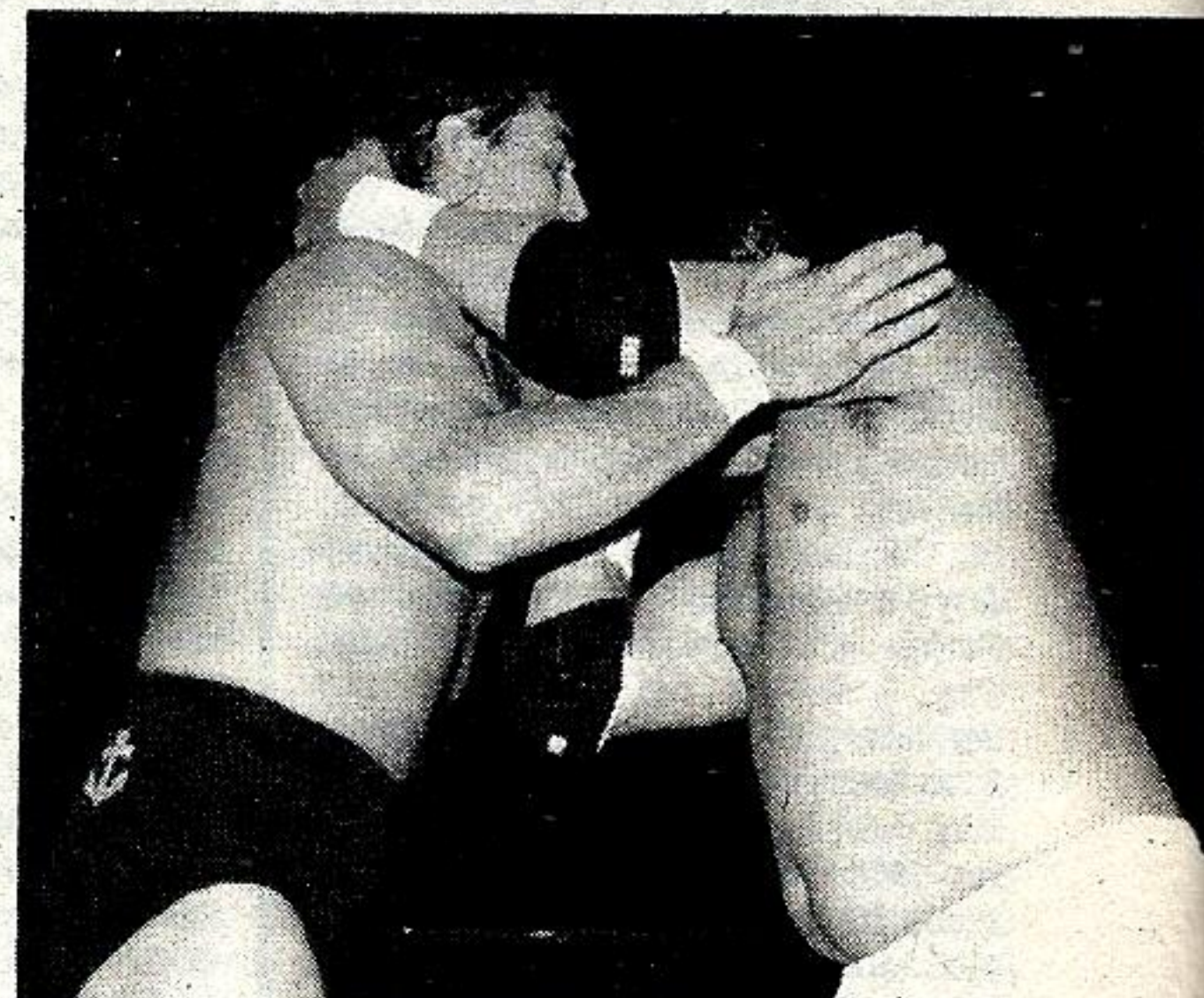
But what disdain Steiner and Rotundo once displayed for their amateur upbringing! Rotundo and Steiner, both outstanding scientific wrestlers, turned to rulebreaking and brawling. They listened to Sullivan, one of the most ruthless men in wrestling history.

Rotundo didn't only besmirch Syracuse University; he besmirched the sport as a whole.

And then, after two years of this nonsense, Rotundo changed. He left Sullivan behind and joined Norman in a war against Sullivan and Cac-



Rotundo has befriended Norman (above), but not too long ago he warred with NWA favorites like Hawk (left). "Captain Mike" leads the charge against Samoan Samu (below) and Bill Ford (bottom left and right).



tus Jack.

Many fans believe it was Jack's attack on Rotundo early this year that forced him to change his ways. Rotundo, however, insists that his decision had already been made.

"Jack knew what the deal was," Rotundo said. "He knew that I'd had enough. Listen, maybe I was bad, but *everybody* goes through a bad stage. Nobody's perfect. Those letters from the Syracuse people made me realize the error of my ways. Respect is important in life. You should respect yourself, and when that happens, others respect you, too."

Unfortunately, Cactus Jack and Sullivan showed no respect for Norman. Their vicious attack on Norman finally brought out the best in Rotundo, who is now doing some damage of his own.

And—remarkably—Rotundo is back in contention for the NWA World title. At press time, he was the number-four contender to Ric Flair's belt. This is an incredible achievement for a man who was suffocating under Sullivan's control as recently as four months ago.

"Sullivan really hurt my career," Rotundo admitted. "Looking back, I realize he did nothing for me, and that's a shame. Sure, me and Rick had a good team, but we could've been better without Sullivan. You know, me and Rick were friends, but Sullivan made us enemies. He's as evil as they come, and I have no time for people like him anymore."

"When I was at SU, I'd walk on the mat and soak in the cheers. People liked me because of what I stood for. I carried that over into my wrestling career. Me and Barry Windham were a great team, and we were even better because we were honest."

"Well, that's the way it's going to be from now on. No more rule-breaking. No more hurting people. No more embarrassing the University."

And no more embarrassing himself. ☐

Bad Guys, THE MAGAZINE

For a couple of years, the self-righteous editors of London Publishing Co. actually permitted an entire magazine to be published that was devoted to those wrestlers, managers, and valets who couldn't care less about the rules of this sport or the wishes of most fans. Then, suddenly and without explanation, they pulled the plug on it. Maybe they felt threatened—who knows?

From a business standpoint, they must have known that *Bad Guys* is what the people wanted, because it's back—although relegated to the "Magazine Within A Magazine" in *Wrestle America*. Rulebreakers, along with their fans and journalistic supporters, are used to getting the short end of the stick, so we'll take what we can get!

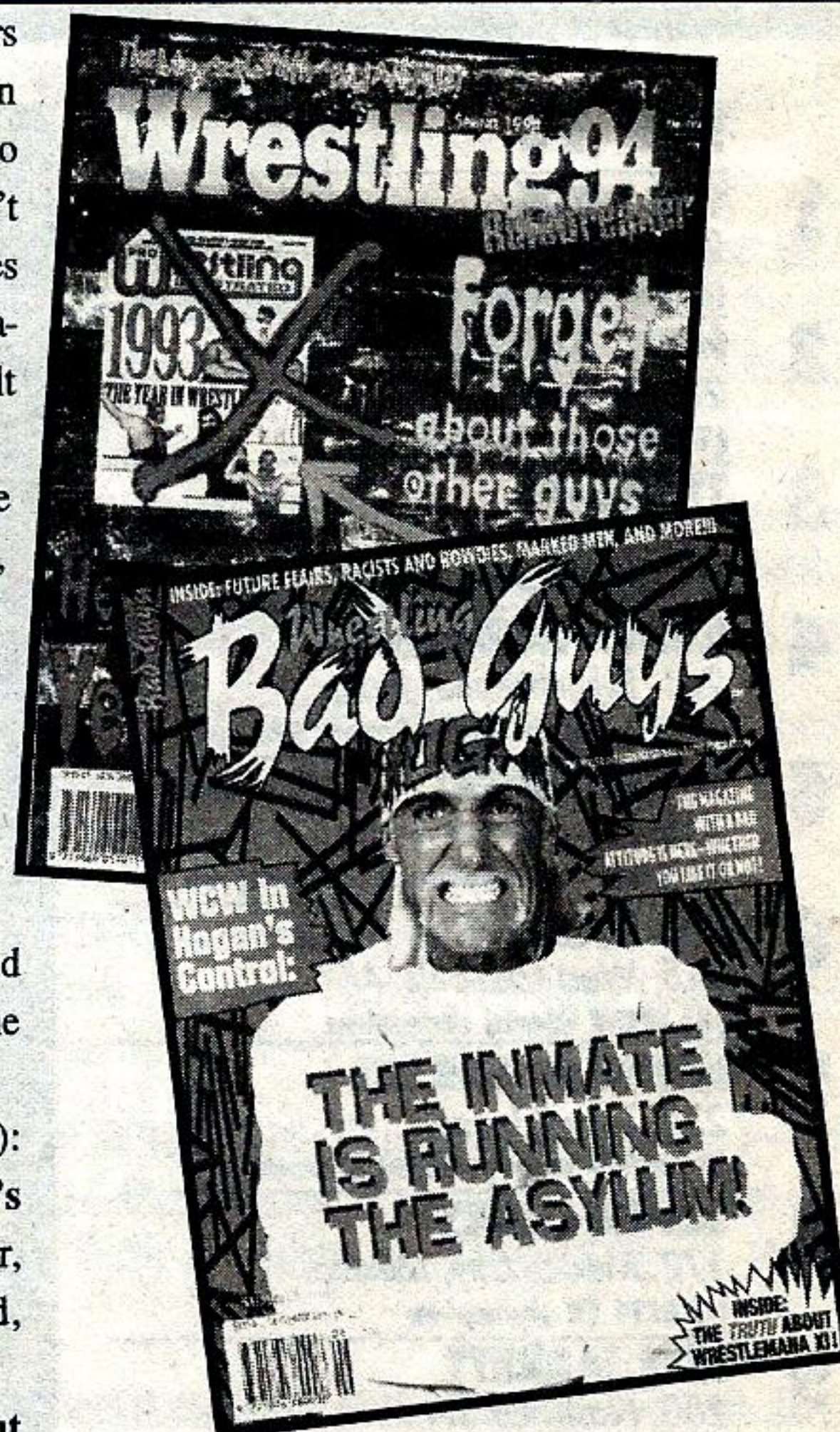
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Wrestling 93: Rulebreaker (Winter 1993): **Brat Patrol! Wrestling 93 Targets The Sport's Most Pampered Players.** Plus: Big Van Vader, Ric Flair, Steve Austin, Lex Luger, The Kid, Heavenly Bodies, Hall of Fame—Harley Race.

Wrestling 94—Rulebreaker: Forget About Those Other Guys—Here Are The Real Year-End Awards. (Spring 1994): 1993—The Year Of The Rulebreaker. Plus: Sting, Brian Lee, Hall of Fame—Killer Kowalski.

Wrestling Bad Guys (Winter 1994): **King Kong Bundy—Monster With A Mission.** Color Pinup: Bon Backlund. Plus: Tommy Dreamer, UFOs, Hulk Hogan, Abdullah the Butcher, Big Van Vader, Hall of Fame—Ivan Koloff.

Wrestling Bad Guys (Spring 1995): **Vader's Vow Of Violence: "I've Begun My Systematic**



Destruction Of Hulk Hogan!" Color Action Gallery: Sabu. Plus: Kevin Sullivan, Bob Backlund, Ric Flair, Jim Cornette & The Rock 'n' Roll Express, Tatanka, fat wrestlers, Hall of Fame—George Steele.

Wrestling Bad Guys (Summer 1995): **WCW In Hogan's Control: The Inmate Is Running The Asylum!** Color Action Gallery: Big Van Vader. Plus: WCW Uncensored, Bret Hart-Jerry Lawler, Bubba Rogers, the next Flair, Hall of Fame—Fritz Von Erich.

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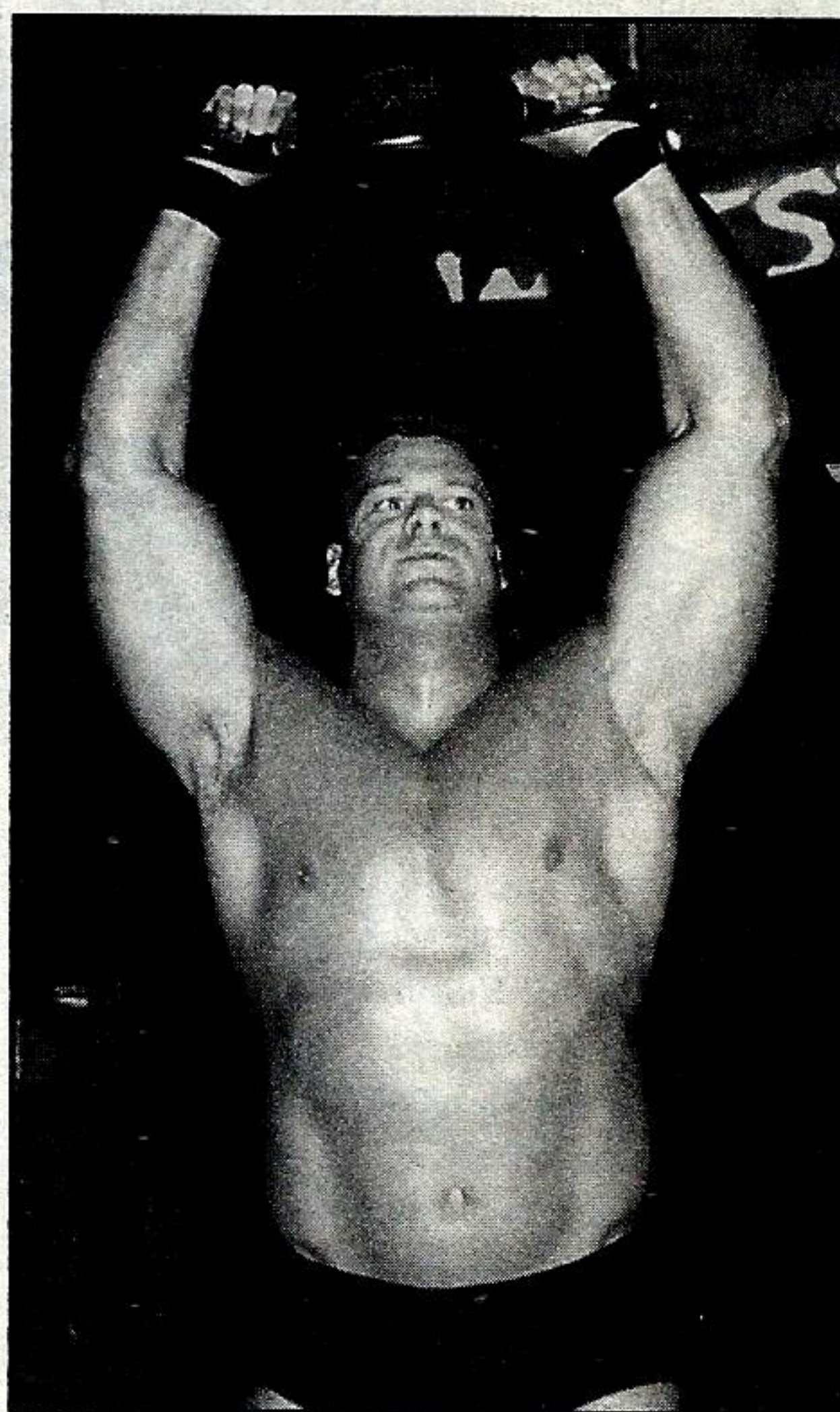
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The Wrestler 63

Wrestler

TOP 10

- 1 **THE ROCK**
272, Miami, FL
(8) No. 2 contender: WWF World title
- 2 **MIKE AWESOME**
285, Tampa, FL
(1) ECW World champion
- 3 **TRIPLE-H**
279, Greenwich, CT
(2) WWF World champion
- 4 **KENTA KOBASHI**
261, Fukuchiyama, Japan
(4) All-Japan Triple Crown champion
- 5 **CHRIS BENOIT**
218, Edmonton, Alberta
(-) WWF Intercontinental champion
- 6 **SID VICIOUS**
318, West Memphis, AR
(3) WCW World champion
- 7 **KENSUKE SASAKI**
233, Tokyo, Japan
(5) IWGP heavyweight champion
- 8 **SUPER CRAZY**
172, Mexico City, Mexico
(-) ECW TV champion
- 9 **JEFF JARRETT**
230, Nashville, TN
(7) WCW U.S. champion
- 10 **KURT ANGLE**
233, Pittsburgh, PA
(6) No. 3 contender: WWF World title



Mike Awesome

TAG TEAMS

- 1 **BUH BUH RAY & D-VON DUDLEY**
Combined weight: 585 pounds
(1) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 2 **JUSTIN CREDIBLE & LANCE STORM**
Combined weight: 459 pounds
(7) ECW World tag team champions
- 3 **VADER & STEVE WILLIAMS**
Combined weight: 740 pounds
(3) All-Japan International tag team champion
- 4 **CHRISTIAN & EDGE**
Combined weight: 465 pounds
(9) WWF World tag team champions
- 5 **DON & RON HARRIS**
Combined weight: 592 pounds
(6) WCW World tag team champions
- 6 **YUJI NAGATA & MANABU NAKANISHI**
Combined weight: 455 pounds
(4) IWGP International tag team champions
- 7 **JEFF & MATT HARDY**
Combined weight: 422 pounds
(-) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title
- 8 **MIKE AWESOME & RAVEN**
Combined weight: 550 pounds
(5) No. 1 contenders: ECW World tag title
- 9 **BIG VITO & JOHNNY THE BULL**
Combined weight: 487 pounds
(2) No. 1 contenders: WCW World tag title
- 10 **TOO COOL**
Combined weight: 433 pounds
(8) No. 3 contenders: WWF World tag title

WCW

World Champion:

SID VICIOUS

(C) 318, West Memphis, AR

- 1—**JEFF JARRETT**
(1) 230, Nashville, TN
- 2—**VAMPIRO**
(2) 220, Montreal, Quebec
- 3—**HULK HOGAN**
(-) 275, Venice Beach, CA
- 4—**STING**
(-) 260, Venice Beach, CA
- 5—**LEX LUGER**
(4) 275, Chicago, IL
- 6—**RIC FLAIR**
(3) 243, Charlotte, NC
- 7—**DUSTIN RHODES**
(10) 274, Austin, TX
- 8—**TERRY FUNK**
(-) 247, Amarillo, TX
- 9—**BRIAN KNOBS**
(9) 284, Allentown, PA
- 10—**THE WALL**
(-) 320 Ocean Grove, NJ

WWF

World Champion:

TRIPLE-H

(C) 279, Greenwich, CT

- 1—**CHRIS BENOIT**
(6) 218, Edmonton, Alberta
- 2—**THE ROCK**
(2) 272, Miami, FL
- 3—**KURT ANGLE**
(1) 233, Pittsburgh, PA
- 4—**RIKISHI PHATU**
(3) 401, San Francisco, CA
- 5—**THE BIG SHOW**
(4) 500, Atlanta, GA
- 6—**KANE**
(7) 345, parts unknown
- 7—**CRASH HOLLY**
(9) 225, Mobile, AL
- 8—**EDDY GUERRERO**
(-) 221, El Paso, TX
- 9—**CHRIS JERICHO**
(8) 225, Vancouver, British Columbia
- 10—**TAZZ**
(-) 248, Red Hook, NY

ECW

World Champion:

MIKE AWESOME

(C) 285, Tampa, FL

- 1—**SUPER CRAZY**
(2) 172, Mexico City, Mexico
- 2—**TOMMY DREAMER**
(3) 245, Yonkers, NY
- 3—**RHINO**
(1) 285, Detroit, MI
- 4—**KID KASH**
(-) 205, Johnson City, TN
- 5—**LITTLE GUIDO**
(5) 221, Howard Beach, NY
- 6—**GRIMES**
(-) 399, Bronx, NY
- 7—**RAVEN**
(6) 265, Short Hills, NJ
- 8—**YOSHIHIRO TAJIRI**
(9) 224, Tokyo, Japan
- 9—**ANGEL**
(-) 265, Bronx, NY
- 10—**THE SANDMAN**
(8) 244, Philadelphia, PA

NWA

NWA Champion:

NAOYA OGAWA

(C) 286, Tokyo, Japan

- 1—**COLORADO KID**
(1) 231, Colorado Springs, CO
- 2—**BIG DON BRODIE**
(4) 350, Jackson, MS
- 3—**GARY STEELE**
(3) 241, London, England
- 4—**RUKKUS**
(7) 235, Atlanta, GA
- 5—**COLT STEELE**
(5) 240, Charlotte, NC
- 6—**CHRIS CANDIDO**
(-) 226, Carteret, NJ
- 7—**CURTIS SLAMDAWG**
(8) 222, Boston, MA
- 8—**KURRGAN**
(-) 345, Hamilton, Ontario
- 9—**JUGGERNAUT**
(6) 217, Fort Worth, TX
- 10—**KEVIN NORTHCUTT**
(2) 348, Chalmette, LA

OFFICIAL RATINGS

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue. Note: In an effort to keep the ratings as up-to-date as possible, these pages are often the last to be sent to the printer. Thus, the ratings may reflect changes not reflected in the remainder of the issue.

For period ended April 5, 2000

ALL PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Ma'och; 1—Tony Jones; 2—Michael Modest; 3—Frank Murdoch; 4—Donovan Morgan; 5—Boyce LeGrande; 6—Vinny Massaro; 7—Robert Thompson; 8—Hardcore Comini; 9—Vance Vain; 10—Bison Smith.

INDEPENDENT PRO WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Tom Brandi; 1—King Kong Bundy; 2—Cueball Carmichael; 3—Jimmy Cicero; 4—Corporal Punishment; 5—Big Slain; 6—Julio Fantastico; 7—Christian York; 8—Jacey North; 9—Joey Matthews; 10—Vernon Porter.

MARYLAND CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Bruiser; 1—Tom Brandi; 2—Romeo Valentino; 3—Julio Fantastico; 4—Gillberg; 5—Gregory Martin; 6—Jimmy Cicero; 7—Corporal Punishment; 8—Dino Devine; 9—Christian York; 10—Adam Flash.

MASON DIXON WRESTLING: Champion—Jamie Harris; 1—Punchy McGee; 2—Mason Hunter; 3—Chick Scott; 4—Latin Tornado; 5—Bob Brown; 6—The Bounty Hunter; 7—Ox Williams; 8—Brute Shooter; 9—Lance Malinowski; 10—Kid Stuff.

NORTHEAST WRESTLING: Champion—Ralph Mosca; 1—Dave Vicious; 2—King Kong Bundy; 3—Julio Fantastico; 4—Xavier; 5—Christian York; 6—Corporal Punishment; 7—Qeenan Creed; 8—Joey Matthews; 9—Don Montoya; 10—Sledge.

NWA WILDSIDE: Champion—Rukkus; 1—Rick Michaels; 2—David Young;

3—A.J. Styles; 4—Terry Knight; 5—Shank; 6—Scotty Wrenn; 7—Romeo Bliss; 8—J.C. Dazz; 9—Jessie Taylor; 10—Jorge Estrada.

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Michael Modest; 1—Joe E. Legend; 2—Cheetah Master; 3—Ty Street; 4—J.J. Johnson; 5—Eddie Valentine; 6—Scott Furie; 7—Johnny Maxx; 8—Nick Mondo; 9—Jeff Peterson; 10—Brian Logan.

RHODE ISLAND WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Wolverine; 1—Danger Boy Alfredo; 2—Pierre the Mountie; 3—Live Wire; 4—Danny Cama; 5—Bad News; 6—Thrash; 7—Max Brannigan; 8—Captain Maniac Cop; 9—Mael; 10—The Intern.

SOUTHERN CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Scab; 1—Natrone Steele; 2—Rick Link; 3—Uncle Tom Kettle; 4—Toad; 5—Major DeBeers; 6—Boris Dragoff; 7—Poison Ivey; 8—Manny Fernandez; 9—Tears; 10—Stratus.

SOUTHERN STATES WRESTLING: Champion—Tracey Smothers; 1—War Machine; 2—Chuck Jones; 3—Beau James; 4—Ricky Harrison; 5—Buddy Landell; 6—Ron Ray; 7—K.C. Thunder; 8—Brian Overbay; 9—Boris Dragoff; 10—Steve Flynn.

UNIFIED CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Al Savage; 1—Steve Southern; 2—Tony Sweatt; 3—Chad Cheetum; 4—Joe Kane; 5—Big Nasty; 6—Aiky Breaky Kid; 7—Frank Smith; 8—Echmo; 9—Tommy Martinelli; 10—Mr. Wrestling III.

WILD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING OUTLAWS: Champion—Indiana Kidd Jr.; 1—Don Basher; 2—Rob Ramer; 3—Johnnie Walker; 4—Billy Bart; 5—Cousin Ernie; 6—The Convict; 7—The Soultaker; 8—Wild Thing; 9—Nate Webb; 10—Lamar Erckle.

NEW JAPAN

IWGP Champion:

KENSUKE SASAKI

(C) 233, Tokyo, Japan

1—JUSHIN LIGER

(9) 206, Hiroshima, Japan

2—SHINYA HASHIMOTO

(2) 287, Gifu, Japan

3—NAOYA OGAWA

(3) 286, Tokyo, Japan

4—KOJI KANEMOTO

(10) 205, Osaka, Japan

5—MASA CHONO

(1) 235, Tokyo, Japan

6—KEIJI MUTO

(4) 245, Yamanashi, Japan

7—SATOSHI KOJIMA

(-) 223, Tokyo, Japan

8—SHINJIRO OTANI

(-) 215, Yokohama, Japan

9—HIROYOSHI TENZAN

(-) 270, Tokyo, Japan

10—DON FRYE

(8) 205, Sierra Vista, AZ

ALL-JAPAN

Triple Crown Champion:

KENTA KOBASHI

(C) 261, Fukuchiyama, Japan

1—STEVE WILLIAMS

(8) 265, Norman, OK

2—MIKE BARTON

(-) 256, Austin, TX

3—JUN AKIYAMA

(2) 230, Hiroshima, Japan

4—AKIRA TAUE

(4) 265, Chichibu, Japan

5—VADER

(5) 450, Denver, CO

6—TOSHIKI KAWADA

(1) 245, Ashikaga, Japan

7—YOSHIHIRO TAKAYAMA

(-) 270, Sapporo, Japan

8—TAKAO OMORI

(9) 221, Tokyo, Japan

9—WOLF HAWKFIELD

(10) 272, New Port Richey, FL

10—MITSU HARU MISAWA

(3) 228, Ashikaga, Japan

EMLL

EMLL Champion:

UNIVERSO DOS MIL

(C) 240, Mexico City, Mexico

1—ATLANTIS

(1) 180, Guadalajara, Mexico

2—VILLANO III

(2) 220, Mexico City, Mexico

3—MR. NIEBLA

(5) 185, Cuatitlan, Mexico

4—PIERROTH JR.

(8) 251, Cuernavaca, Mexico

5—DR. O'BORMAN JR.

(9) 185, Mexico City, Mexico

6—EL HIJO DEL SANTO

(-) 180, Tulancingo, Mexico

7—NEGRO CASAS

(-) 175, Mexico City, Mexico

8—RAYO DE JALISCO JR.

(4) 270, Guadalajara, Mexico

9—EMILIO CHARLES JR.

(10) 222, Mexico City, Mexico

10—BLUE PANTHER

(6) 215, Mexico City, Mexico

AAA

AAA Champion:

LATIN LOVER

(C) 190, Monterrey, Mexico

1—PIRATA MORGAN

(3) 221, Mexico City, Mexico

2—ABISMO NEGRO

(7) 210, Pachuca, Mexico

3—PERRO AGUAYO JR.

(10) 165, Zatecas, Mexico

4—CHARLY MANSON

(-) 221, Mexico City, Mexico

5—HEAVY METAL

(5) 180, Mexico City, Mexico

6—HECTOR GARZA

(2) 215, Monterrey, CA

7—EL TEXANO

(9) 225, Mexico City, Mexico

8—CIBERNETICO

(4) 235, Mexico City, Mexico

9—PERRO AGUAYO

(1) 220, Zatecas, Mexico

10—BLUE DEMON JR.

(6) 180, Toluca, Mexico

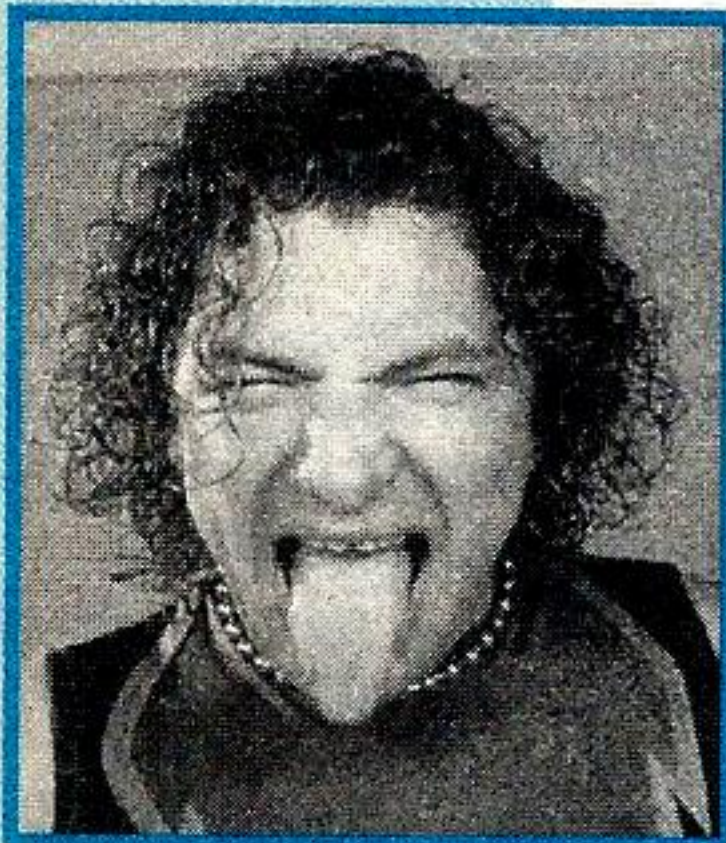
Ratings . . .

ANALYSIS

Supercard shakeups ... Now that *Pro Wrestling Illustrated's* spring supercard season is over, we thought we'd look at which new wrestlers emerged as major players in their respective federations. Of course, a lot of the major players going in to the spring pay-per-views (check out the August issue of *PWI* for detailed reviews of ECW Living Dangerously, WCW Uncensored, and WWF WrestleMania) remained major players regardless of the outcomes of their matches, but a few new players stepped up.

It's not coincidental that the federation that saw the fewest new stars emerging, WCW, got its worst buy rate of all-time at Uncensored 2000. The big wins on that show went to **Sid Vicious**, **Hulk Hogan**, **Sting**, **Don** and **Ron Harris**, and **Dustin Rhodes**—not exactly your big stars of tomorrow. The only relative newcomer to take a big step forward at Uncensored was **Vampiro**. His victory over **Fit Finlay** wasn't all that memorable, but he did help Sting beat **Lex Luger** and could benefit from a full-time alliance with his brother in paint.

Unfortunately for Vampiro, he didn't accomplish enough to earn a spot in our Top 10 this month. Once again, only World champ Vicious and U.S. champ **Jeff Jarrett** represent WCW in the Top 10. Let's hope that **Eric Bischoff** and **Vince Russo** can give the company the boost it has desperately needed for months.



Super Crazy

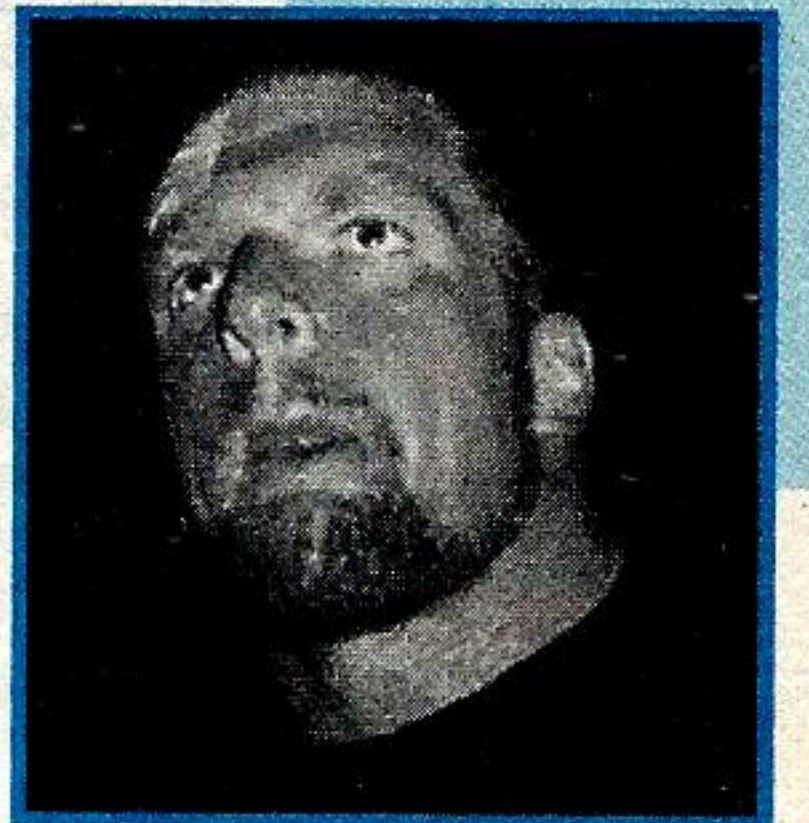
Living Dangerously won't rank as one of the federation's best of all-time, but that wasn't really due to lack of effort on anyone's part. Given that **Rob Van Dam** and **Jerry Lynn** were on the shelf with leg injuries, **Sabu** had just left the promotion, and **The Sandman** had to forfeit a scheduled match in order to tend to his injured wife, there was some pretty good action.

Living Dangerously 2000 will likely go down as the card on which **Super Crazy** officially became a big-time player in ECW. He overcame a lot of interference and obstacles to win the tournament for the vacant ECW TV title. Virtually everyone who had been watching ECW closely for the last few years knew Crazy had big-time talent, but he needed that breakthrough win, and it looks like this was it. He earned that number-eight spot in the Top 10.

Despite his loss to Crazy in the tourney finals, **Rhino** also made a good showing and proved once and for all that he can be as ruthless as anyone. When he felt Sandman's wife, **Lori Fullington**, got in his way, he didn't hesitate for a second before viciously spearing her through a table! Anyone who doesn't think Rhino is a major player in ECW after Living Dangerously better not tell him that.

Even **Little Guido** took another small step forward at the PPV. Despite his loss to Crazy in the tournament semifinals, he turned in a strong performance. If he ever does disassociate himself from **Sal E. Graziano** and drops the comedy act for good, he could be a major player in ECW.

Of course, WrestleMania is always memorable for at least a few reasons. Besides the shocking turn of **Vince McMahon** this year, we saw both **Triple-H** and **The Rock** remain red-hot (both remain in our Top 10). We also saw **Chris Benoit** prove he's ready to be classified as an elite WWF star by winning the Intercontinental title cleanly in a three-way match with **Kurt Angle** and **Chris Jericho**. "The Canadian Crippler" grabs the number-five spot in our Top 10.

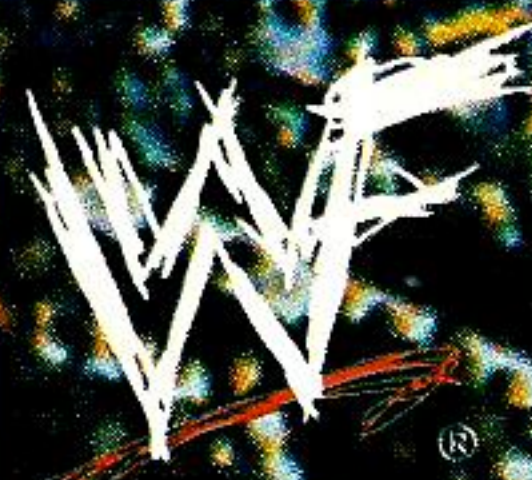


Triple-H

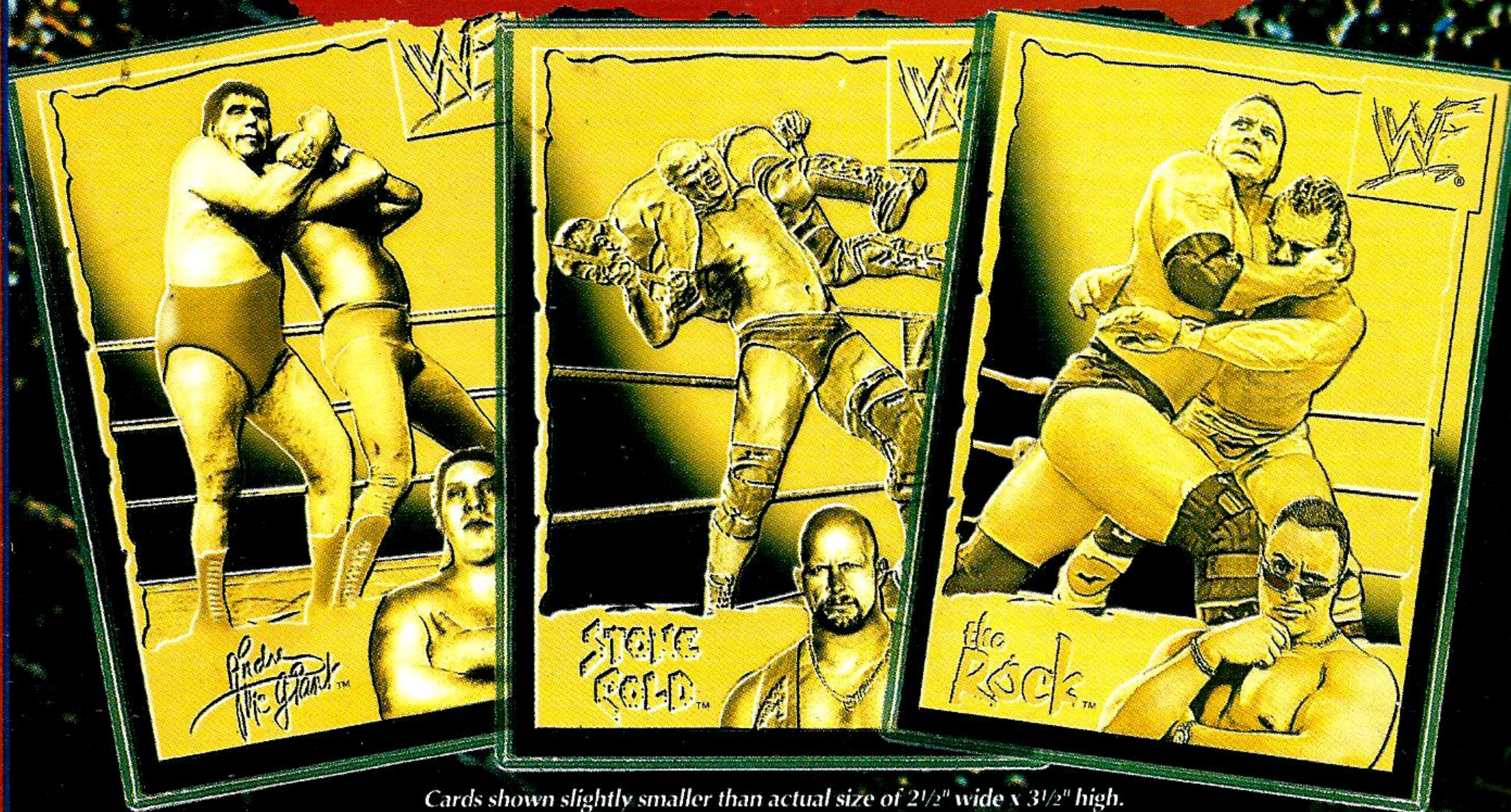
Christian and **Edge** made their first WrestleMania match memorable when they beat **The Dudley Boyz** and **The Hardy Boyz** for their first WWF World tag team title. Perhaps this was a big step for them in their effort to become a dominant team ... or perhaps one or both will use this win as a springboard for singles success. For now, they get the number-four ranking among tag teams.

Laugh at them or their collective name (**T & A**) if you will, but **Test** and **Albert** took a step forward at WrestleMania by beating **Al Snow** and **Steve Blackman**. With a few more key wins together, these two big bruisers should make our tag team ratings. □

That's all for now! If you have any questions or comments regarding our ratings, we want to hear from you. Write to: "Ratings Analysis," c/o The Wrestler, Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.



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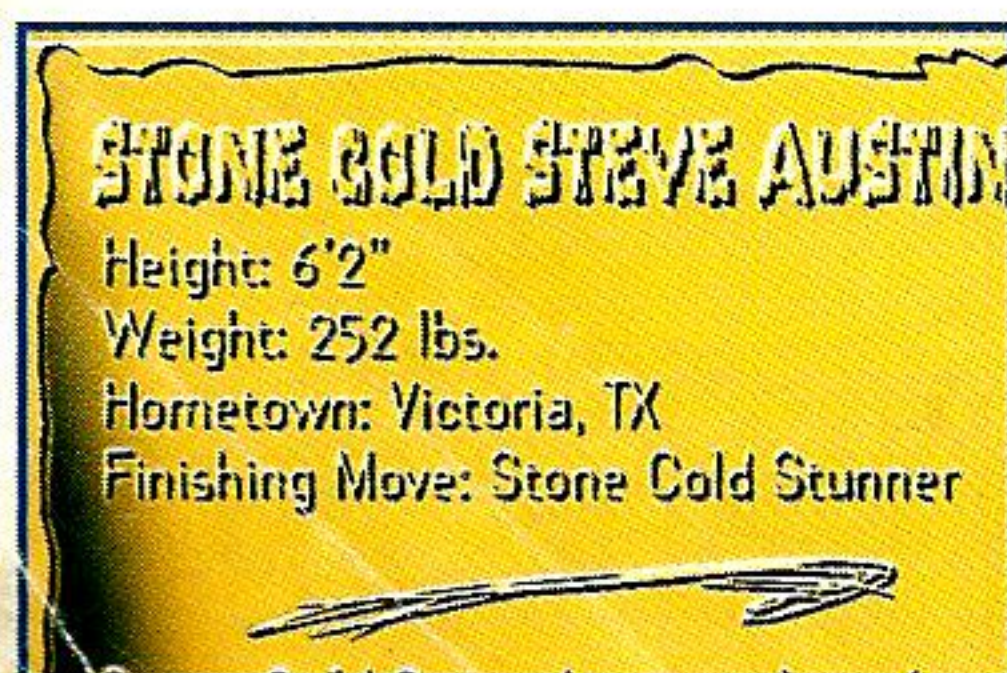
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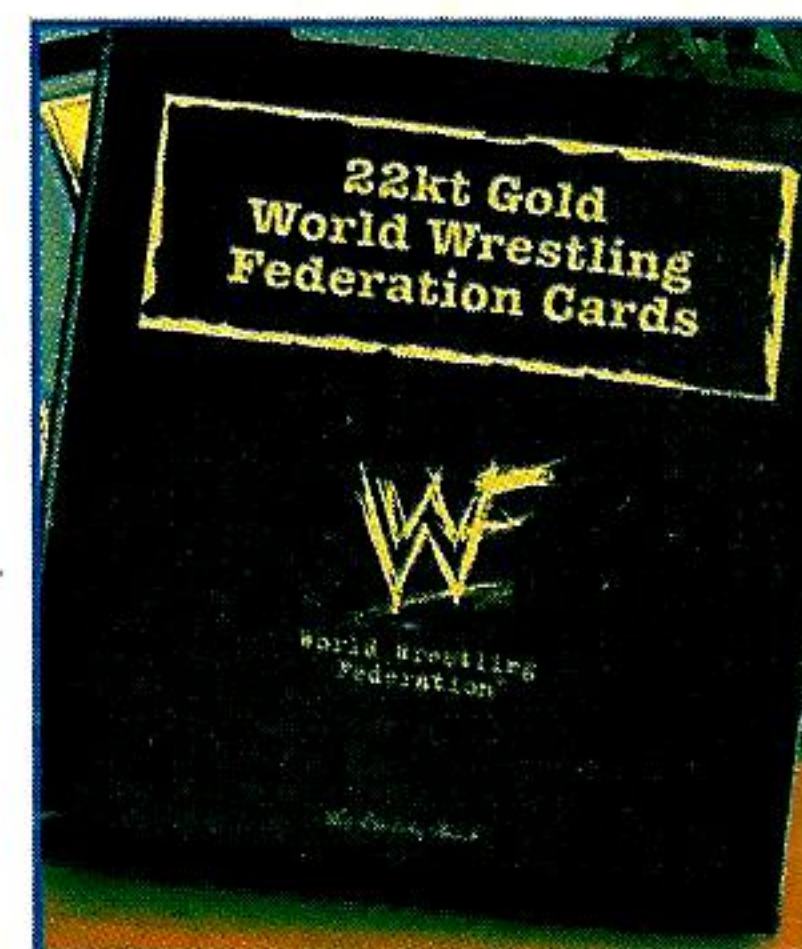
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